JUN 19 1957

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

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BY THE REV.
D. M. ROSS, D.D.

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1928

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

EVANGELICAL
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PREFACE

IN the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we have the supreme manifestation of the suffering and self-sacrificing love of God for His sinful children, and we see the heights of suffering and self-sacrificing love for their fellows to which the followers of Jesus are to aspire. The Cross illumines as nothing else can what God is and what man may be: that is, it illumines as nothing else can the meaning of this human life of ours.

It has been a dominant conviction of Christians in all the Christian centuries and in all branches of the Christian Church that Christ and Christ crucified has been the power of God unto salvation. But amongst those who are loyal to Jesus as the Lord of their life there has been no unanimity in their interpretation of the significance of the Cross. Divergent interpretations of its significance have been a fruitful source of perplexity not only for theologians but for a much wider circle. It is in view of this perplexity, and in view of the danger of the central place of the Cross in the Christian religion being thereby weakened that the present volume has been written.

Paul is often supposed to be mainly responsible for an interpretation of the significance of the Cross by which the modern mind is troubled. This idea may prove to be illusory. The longer I have studied what Paul has to say on the subject, the stronger has grown my conviction that with Paul as our guide, we shall not only be helped to a right handling of many of the misgivings and perplexities to which theories of the atonement have given rise, but also be helped to make our own the words in which he expressed his sense of the Cross as the reality of realities for human life: "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is one special reason why Paul may here be a helpful guide for us. In recent years attention has been increasingly concentrated upon the Jesus of history and upon the mind of the Jesus of history, with the result that in one and another direction there has been a notable change in this theological outlook. There has been a change in the method of approach to the interpretation of this significance of the Cross. More and more the Cross has come to be interpreted in the light of the life of Jesus, in the light of what He lived for, in the light of the inevitable clash of His ideals with the legalistic conceptions of the Judaism of His day as represented by the majority of the Pharisees and the Scribes. Now, Paul,

while still a Pharisee, was well informed about Jesus of Nazareth and what He stood for. Had he not known what kind of person Jesus was, what kind of things He was in the habit of doing, and what kind of things He was in the habit of saying, it is difficult to conceive how a man of Paul's stretch of mind and tenderness of heart could ever have been induced to become a ruthless persecutor of His followers. And of this we may be sure, that Paul understood fully why his fellow Pharisees had resolved to bring the career of this Prophet of Nazareth to an end. He himself shared their alarm at the disastrous effects which the revolutionary teaching of Jesus was only too likely to have upon the interests of the Jewish religion and of the Jewish nation. There was, indeed, at work in the heart of Paul the Pharisee a spiritual ferment which would by and by help him to a truer understanding of the personality and message of Jesus, but as yet his estimate of Jesus was that of his fellow Pharisees. He believed that the ideals of Jesus were absolutely irreconcilable with the ideals of the Judaism in which he had been reared, and to whose service he had dedicated himself with exceptional resoluteness. He believed that in the interests of the divinely sanctioned system of the Jewish religion it was imperative that the career of Jesus should have been ended on the Cross.

If Paul as a Pharisee interpreted the Cross

in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus, it was inevitable that after he became a Christian he should never cease to bring the life and death into the closest relation with one another. Special help may therefore be looked for from Paul by those who are minded to go back to this Jesus of history in interpreting the significance of the Cross.

It may be helpful for the reader to have a brief statement of the plan of this volume.

An introductory chapter indicates how the interpretation of Christianity has been affected in recent years by increased attention to the personality and life and teaching of this Jesus of history. Then follow four sections of unequal length.

In Section I, consisting of one long chapter on "Jesus, the Lover of Men" an effort is made to bring the Cross into close relation with the whole life of Jesus, and more especially with the greatness of what He aimed at for His fellows and with the amazing strength of the love which inspired Him to confront and endure the worst the defenders of the traditional legalistic Judaism could do to Him.

Section II, which is the main part of the volume, deals with Paul's interpretation of the significance of the Cross. These are some of the leading ideas: that the great crisis in Paul's life was mediated through his knowledge

of the Jesus of history and what He stood for ; that he could never think of Jesus apart from the Cross in which he found the supreme unburdening of the mind and heart of his Lord ; that the Cross was inextricably bound up with the new spiritual experience, the "new creation," which came to him when it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in him ; that in the light of the Cross he re-interpreted this ideal of the good life, his understanding of the love of God for his sinful children, and his conception of the meaning of salvation.

Section III is an attempt to give an answer to this question : In what relation does our exposition of Paul's interpretation of the significance of the Cross which we have offered in Section II stand to what theologians speak of as the forensic theory of the Atonement. Paul has been often regarded as identified in a very special way with this theory. It has found no place in our exposition of His teaching about the Cross. His relation to the theory we cannot therefore ignore.

In Chapter II a brief statement of the theory is given, and reference made to some of the difficulties it raises. In the three following chapters it is examined in the light of (1) the life and teaching of Jesus, (2) the teaching of Paul, and (3) the history of Christian thought.

The discussion of such a theory may seem to concern only professional theologians. But

it enlists the interest of a large number of lay folk, and for a valid reason. Too often the suggestion has been made, less often to-day than fifty years ago, that the acceptance of some form of the forensic theory of the Atonement is an indispensable condition of God bestowing upon sinful men the blessings which come through Jesus Christ—the divine forgiveness, the gift of the Spirit for the renewal of the inner life, a title to the life of eternal blessedness in heaven. The knowledge that such a suggestion has been a fruitful source of perplexity and sore spiritual distress seems to be a sufficient warrant for giving so much attention to this forensic theory in a volume written for a wider circle than that of theologians.

As this section is more or less of a digression, it may conveniently be skipped by readers who have been untroubled by the difficulties which have been raised for others by the forensic theory of the Atonement.

Section IV on the Appeal of Christ and His Cross is what all that has gone before has been leading up to.

Here we are confronted, not with theological doctrines or ecclesiastical institutions, at least not in the first place, but with the personality of the Jesus of history as we are made aware of it through the story of the love for His fellows which devised great things for them, took upon

itself the burden of their evil plight, and nerved Him to tread the way of the Cross for their sakes; through the story of the unveiling, in His life of love-inspired service and sacrifice and suffering, of the unwearied fatherly love of God for His weak and wayward children; through the story of the new life of faith and hope and love which has been quickened all through the Christian ages by the contact of the spirit of Jesus with the spirit of man.

The personality of Jesus—the miracle of miracles, the core of the Christian religion—is behind the appeal which is made to the universal heart and conscience by Christ and His Cross. A response to this appeal has spiritual possibilities for human life to be estimated in the light of the unsearchable riches of the personality of Jesus. It means new opportunities for all that is best and most heroic in man, a new handling of the perplexing problems of human life, a new stimulus for the development of individuality through single-hearted devotion to the common good. In the measure in which a man responds to the appeal of Christ and His Cross, he is committed to do his utmost for the highest and has at his command new power to achieve what he aims at.

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INTRODUCTION

THE modern theological outlook has been profoundly affected by the increased attention which has been paid, especially since the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, to a study of the life and teaching of the historical Jesus. The publication in 1835 of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* is here an important landmark. Strauss started with the assumption that historical investigation will not justify the supreme place which the Christian Church has assigned to Jesus Christ in its faith and worship. His revolutionary interpretation of the life of Jesus created a sensation in Germany and compelled theologians like Neander, in their defence of the very heart of the Christian faith, to address themselves to the task of investigating afresh the story of the life of the Founder of Christianity. It was not till a somewhat later period that the novel views of Strauss were widely known amongst English-speaking peoples. In 1863 Ernest Renan, an even more brilliant and attractive writer than Strauss, published his *Life of Jesus*, which had an extraordinary circulation, and proved to be a powerful factor in concentrating the attention of Christian thinkers upon the life of the

historical Jesus. In the following year (1864) Strauss published a new life of Jesus, addressed not so much to the theologians as to the common people; as its title indicated: *The Life of Jesus, composed for the German People.*

Both Strauss and Renan were fully aware that their interpretation of the life of Jesus, if it was found to stand the tests of sane historical criticism, could not fail to have its issue in a serious depreciation of the worth of the Christian religion and in the ultimate disintegration of the Christian churches. The influence of their books is apparent in what has been written about Jesus in the last sixty years. They have had successors who have differed in matters of detail from them and from one another, but who have shared their assumption that the historical Jesus was not big enough to justify the supreme place assigned to Him by the Christian Church in its faith and worship. The picture of Jesus we have in the New Testament, it is said, is not true to historical reality, it is an idealization of the real Jesus by the members of the early Christian Society. But here the question obtrudes itself: If Jesus was just "like one of ourselves," if there was not something unique, transcendent in His personality, how did that early Christian Society with its distinctive ideals and distinctive ethical and religious life ever come into existence? Further, the successors of Strauss and Renan

have to explain how the Christian Society in the time of its early expansion came to exercise such a profound influence upon the life of the Græco-Roman world. It may be true that in contact with that life the Christian Society annexed to itself this and the other wholesome feature of existing religious and ethical movements. But here again a question obtrudes itself: If the Christian Society had not been dominated by the conviction that in Him whom they acknowledged as Lord they were in touch with a unique personality who had a unique significance for the children of men, what could have urged it to be ever going further afield with its good news about Christ, and so, in pursuit of its mission, to be brought into contact with the life of the Græco-Roman world? Contact with the Græco-Roman world will not explain how the Christian Society came to give to Jesus their Lord a supreme place in personal devotion, in worship, in the sphere of thought and in the sphere of duty. It was the impression made upon the Christian Society by the unique personality of Jesus, which explains how it ever came to have an opportunity of borrowing anything from the environment of the Græco-Roman world. Attention to historical realities may render more difficult the attempt to minimise the spiritual magnitude and spiritual originality of Jesus.

The work of Strauss and Renan and their

successors, however severely we may judge the assumption on which it is based, has had one wholesome result. It has forced the Christian Church to undertake a fresh study of the life of the Jesus of history, which has had fruitful consequences. In the interests of this fresh study of the life of Jesus there has been during the last sixty years an extraordinary activity in exploring fields which gave promise of throwing light upon the main problem. Scholars have busied themselves with subjects such as these : the social environment in which Jesus lived, the currently accepted religious and ethical ideals of the Judaism of His day, the origin of our Gospels and other writings in the New Testament, the spiritual condition of the Gentile world at the beginning of the Christian era. From the most varied quarters help has been sought for an understanding of the life of Jesus, not merely for an understanding of the outward setting of His life, but also, and this is of far greater importance, for an understanding of His personality. What many of the writers who have been at work in this wide field have set before themselves as their definite aim has been to accept the challenge of Strauss and Renan and their successors, and show that loyalty to historical fact shuts them up to a different interpretation of the personality of Jesus. For their understanding of the significance of Jesus they appeal

not to dogmatic decisions of the Christian Church, but to the facts which historical investigation discloses. As J. R. Seeley put it in his preface to *Ecce Homo*, published anonymously in 1866, their aim has been "to trace the biography of Jesus from point to point, and accept those conclusions about Him, not which church doctors or even apostles have sealed with their authority, but which the facts themselves, critically weighed, appear to warrant."

There are historical facts which suggest that there was something unique in the personality of Jesus, something which forbids us to believe that He was no more than a peculiarly gifted ordinary man. To some of these facts we call attention.

No one denies that Jesus put an unwonted emphasis upon love as the secret of a truly good life, and no one denies that His own life was inspired by a love, singularly wide and singularly strong, for His fellows. His environment, however much He may have owed to it, will not explain why love has such a commanding place in His teaching and in His own life. The facts force us to look for the explanation elsewhere than to His environment; the facts make us aware that we are here witnessing the forthflowing of a stream from some deep well-spring of love in His own heart.

This well-spring of love in his own heart has

a vital connection with His teaching about God. Father is the word He uses habitually in speaking of God, and that word He uses because in fatherly love He finds the most fitting illustration of the essential character of God in His dealings with the children of men. The Scriptures of the Old Testament and the Judaism of His day had many beautiful things to say about the mercy and loving kindness of God. But whatever Jesus as a boy and young man may have owed to lofty conceptions of God in the Old Testament and in Judaism, here also He transcended His environment. His own experience of fellowship with God is the source to which we have to trace back His teaching about God as Father, about the fatherly love of God for His children. The God, in filial fellowship with whom His whole life was lived, was a God of love. And there is something more to be said, something still more arresting. Jesus was conscious of being one in heart and will with the God of love. He speaks and acts as if it belonged to Him to be the revealer of the heart and will of His Father in heaven to His fellows. It is an extraordinary claim He makes for Himself in these words of His : " No one knoweth the Son, save the Father ; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him " (*Matt.* 12.17). This claim to be *the* revealer of the Father is so

extraordinary as to lead not a few expositors to suggest that these words cannot have been uttered by Jesus Himself, and must be treated as an interpolation. Even if such a suggestion could be justified, the claim of Jesus to be the revealer of God would still shine through the story of what He did and said. Even the parable of the Prodigal Son betrays the conviction of Jesus that in receiving sinners and eating with them He is revealing the love of God for His estranged children.

Further, the vision of the Kingdom of God by which the whole life of Jesus was inspired points to something unique in His personality. The mere phrase "the Kingdom of God" He owed to His environment, but His interpretation of what the Kingdom of God was to be was all His own, rooted in His own original spiritual experience. As interpreted by Jesus, the Kingdom was to be a brotherhood of his fellows wide as the love of His Father in heaven, a brotherhood whose members were to be bound together by filial fellowship with the one God and loving Father of all and by loving service to one another. And Jesus believed that He was called by God to be the Leader in the Kingdom of God; that as Leader in the Kingdom of God He stood in a special spiritual relation to all His fellows and was warranted in making special claims upon them for loyalty to Himself and His ideals.

If, then, we have regard to the spiritual experience of Jesus behind His ministry to His fellows and all His teaching about the supreme worth of love, about the fatherly love of God and about the character of the Kingdom of God, we cannot well explain His personality through His environment; we are forced to the conclusion that we are here in presence of a creatively original personality, a personality differentiated from any other personality known to history. The loneliness of Jesus confirms this conclusion. Though linked to His fellows by sympathy as tender as it was strong, He towered above them in His experience and in His ideals. Even those who understood Him best were slow to appreciate the purpose of His life-work. Again and again He felt Himself alone, terribly alone, alone save for His fellowship with His Father in heaven. The words of the Fourth Gospel are a true picture of His experience of loneliness: "Alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (*John* 16.32).

The preceding paragraphs offer no more than a suggestion of what the historical investigation of the facts of the life of Jesus may bring to light about His personality. "The infinite nature of Christ" has many facets. His personality makes a many-sided appeal; to one person in one way, to another

person in a different way. But along whatever line it may come, the appeal which His personality as revealed through the historical facts makes to the heart and conscience is not only perennially powerful, but is in our own day increasingly powerful.

Browning may here be cited as a witness. It is evident that before the publication of *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* in 1850, he had been giving prolonged and serious attention to Strauss's interpretation of the Jesus of history. His description in *Christmas Eve* of the experience of the soliloquist of the poem in the lecture-room of the Göttingen professor reveals how unsatisfying he found "the myth of Christ," and how untrue to the historical facts. The longer Browning brooded over these facts, the stronger became his conviction of the greatness of the personality of Jesus and of the unique significance of the personality of Jesus for the interpretation of the problems of human life. In *Saul* we have this prophecy by David of what the future has in store:

> O Saul, it shall be
> A face like my face that receives thee, a man like to me,
> Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever: a hand like this hand
> Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee. See the Christ stand.

In *The Epistle of Karshish* we have this

outburst with reference to the life of the Nazarene :

> The very God ! think, Abib ; dost though think ?
> So, the All-great were the All-loving too—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, " O heart I made, a heart beats here !
> Face, my hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
> Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine,
> But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
> And thou must love Me, who have died for thee ! "

The Epilogue to *Dramatis Personæ* is a direct criticism of Renan's interpretation of the life of Jesus, which suggested that " the divine Face, known to early Christian days as love, has withdrawn from earth for ever." * This is the gist of Browning's criticism of Renan :

> That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose.

Another expression of Browning's conviction of the unique light, which is flashed upon the mystery of human life from the personality of Jesus the revealer of God as well as of man, may be quoted. In " A Death in the Desert " these words are put into the mouth of the dying St. John :

> I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it.

* Edward Dowden, *Life of Robert Browning*, ch. 11.

Browning was roused by Strauss and Renan to a fresh consideration of the life of Jesus, which led him to react sharply against their estimate of the significance of His personality. And here he is representative of a large and increasing number of Christian thinkers in the last sixty years. Concentration of attention upon the facts of the life of the historical Jesus has been deepening the sense of the unique significance of His personality. Changes may have taken place in the choice of formulas for giving due expression to the sense of the unique personality of Jesus, but what is here of prime importance is a worthy estimate of the spiritual magnitude of Jesus, not the formula in which this estimate is expressed. Within recent years there have been many indications that the personality of Jesus, as disclosed to us by historical investigation, is increasingly laying its power upon men. For example, a distinguished literary critic, who had stood aloof from organized Christianity and found no attractiveness in what he supposed to be the "theological Christ," was somewhat suddenly captured in heart and mind by the personality of the historical Jesus. Here he found light on the problems of human life, which he had sought for in vain elsewhere. In the *Life of Jesus*, which he wrote to tell of what he had discovered in the personality he had too long neglected, he gives vent to his

impatience with critics who are bent on bringing down Jesus to the level of ordinary men: "Criticism of this kind seems never to pause to think the obvious thought that if Jesus had been an ordinary man, it would not now, nineteen hundred years after his death, be striving to prove that he was." *

In these last sixty years it has been a not uncommon experience of earnest-minded thinkers, perplexed by some of the dogmatic decisions of the Christian Church, that their Christian faith has been not only re-established, but reinforced and enriched by the fresh vision of the personality of Jesus which has come to them along the line of the historical investigation of the facts of His life. They may use unconventional phraseology in giving expression to this vision. They are sure, however, that this vision satisfies the demands of the mind as well as of the heart; that it is sufficient in its height and in its scope to explain the rise of the Christian Society and the new life it has infused into generation after generation of the children of men. More especially are they sure that this fresh vision justifies the supreme place which has been given by the Christian Church to Jesus Christ.

* J. Middleton Murry, *The Life of Jesus*, p. 9. Another sentence from Mr. Murry's book may be quoted: "We shall look like men, on the man Jesus. He will stand our scrutiny. Keep we our heads as high as we can, they shall be bowed at the last." (p. 316).

Christian discipleship means for them loyalty to Jesus as the Lord of their life, as the Leader in the Kingdom of God for whose realization they reckon themselves pledged to be His fellow-workers. Religious worship means worship of God in Christ, worship of God whose love to men has been revealed in the life and personality and Cross of Jesus. The inner life of the soul means for them a life centred in fellowship with God in Christ; or in other phraseology, centred in the indwelling of the spirit of Christ.

Such a vision of the unique personality of Jesus cannot be reached as the result of any merely intellectual process. Where there is lacking sympathy with the great things for which Jesus lived and suffered and died, the idea of His unique personality will seem to be no more than a fond illusion which "historical science" must discredit. Here words in the Fourth Gospel have their application: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God" (*John* 7.17). "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (*John* 18.37).

The personality of Jesus, with all it stands for, is the fountain head of the Christian Society. There we have its starting point, and what ought to be, and has in a large measure been, the dominant factor in all its future

development. As is indicated in the words of the Fourth Gospel: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall glorify me: for *he shall take of mine*, and shall declare it unto you" (*John* 16.12-14). That is, it is to be the function of the Spirit of truth to give the disciples of Jesus a widening and deepening insight into the significance of the personality of their Master and an ever increasing sympathy with their Master's ideals. It is in the interest of "the things of Christ" the Spirit is to be their guide—a limitation to which due heed is not always given.

With the personality of Jesus as its starting point and as the dominant factor in its varied life of activity and thought, there is wide room for development in the Christian Society, for development in forms of Church government and ministry, in public worship and in theological reflection. How are we to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate developments? What test are we to use? In the Roman Catholic Church it seems to be taken for granted that developments sanctioned by a decree of a General Council of the Church (or, since 1870, by the infallible Pope speaking *ex cathedra*) have behind them the authority of the Spirit of truth promised by Christ to His disciples. A decision by a General Council

(or Pope) is all the guarantee that is needed for the legitimacy of a development. Once the decision has been arrived at, it is apparently deemed superfluous to raise the question whether it is in harmony with the mind of Jesus. That question is not at any rate seriously faced. In other branches of the Christian Church the decisions of a certain number of the earlier General Councils (beginning with the Council of Nicæa in 325) are treated as if they were infallible and divinely authoritative, and are used as standards by which additional developments are to be tested. An appeal to the mind of Jesus is not kept in the forefront. Even in branches of the Christian Church which are not greatly preoccupied with the decrees of General Councils the mind of Jesus is not always kept in the forefront as the supreme test of the legitimacy of developments. For the Reformed Church the supreme authority is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but there is not seldom an insufficient appreciation of the mind of Jesus as the dominant factor in the Scriptures.

To-day there is an increasing insistence upon the mind of Jesus as our supreme authority in the interpretation of the Christian religion. This is one of the results of the fresh study of the facts of the life of the Jesus of history. Such historical investigation has focussed attention upon the personality and

ideals of Jesus, upon what it was that He lived and died for. So the mind of Jesus has been thrown into relief. Here we have one explanation at least of the extraordinary change in theological outlook which has been taking place in the last sixty years, and one explanation of much of the criticism to which the Church in its methods and ideals is being subjected.

There are critics of the Church and its ways who are out of sympathy with Jesus and what He stands for. There are others who are critics of the Church just because of their loyalty to Jesus and what He stands for. The closer their contact is with the Jesus of history and His ideals, the stronger becomes their impression that in one and another direction the Church has somehow been losing touch with what ought to be the dominant factor in all its activity and thinking. They put to themselves, and they put to the Church, questions such as these: "Is the Church always giving a central place to the things for which Jesus lived and died? Does not the Church often attach supreme importance to things which, however important they may be in their own place, do not seem to have been uppermost in the mind of Jesus?" Let an illustration be given. The so-called Athanasian Creed has had a great vogue in Western Christendom. "Whosoever will be saved": so this Creed begins, "*before all things* it is

necessary to hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled : without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Then follows a declaration of what the Catholic Faith is—a long list of statements about the mysteries of the Godhead and the Person of Christ, and very little else. "This is the Catholic Faith," so runs the concluding pronouncement of the Creed, "which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." Contrast all this with these explicit sayings of Jesus Himself : "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (*Matt.* 7.21). "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?" (*Luke* 6.46). Is it surprising that critics of the Church should ask this question : "Is the Athanasian Creed, on which the Church has to a greater or less extent bestowed its approval, loyal to the ideals of the Jesus of history ?"

Questions such as have been referred to and similar questions are likely enough to be pressed with increasing force in the coming days. They will not be wisely answered with a frown, as if they were the outcome of a waning Christian faith. They may be evidence of a strengthening Christian faith, if at least Christian faith is interpreted as devotion to Jesus and to what Jesus stands for. Might

it not be the wisdom of the Church, as represented by those who are specially responsible for shaping and guiding its policy, to keep an open ear for questions by which members of the Church loyal in their devotion to the Church's well-being are disturbed. Might the outcome not be a fresh vision of ways in which the loyalty of the church to the mind of Jesus would find worthier expression? And with increased loyalty to the mind of Jesus might there not be the removal of one and another hindrance by which the appeal of the Church on behalf of its Lord is being hampered?

The study in this volume of Paul's interpretation of "the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" owes much to the increasing concentration upon the personality of Jesus as expressed in His life and teaching. There have been some widely accepted theories of the Atonement which betray no resolute effort to correlate the sufferings and death of Jesus with the story of His life, with His attitude to sinful men and women, with His teaching about the fatherly, forgiving love of God, with His conviction that in His life and teaching He was giving expression to the heart and will of His Father in heaven towards His sinful children. Our study of the significance of the Cross is governed by a desire to get back to "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

I

JESUS THE LOVER OF MEN

CHAPTER I

JESUS THE LOVER OF MEN

NO one can well read the story of the life of Jesus as told in the Gospels without becoming aware of the singular way in which He was continually bringing Himself alongside of the people, and of people of all sorts, amongst whom He lived. He was no ascetic who stood aloof from His fellows; He lived Himself into the lives and experiences of His fellows. Upon the wideness of His sympathetic interest in the men and women with whom He was brought into contact a sidelight is thrown by the imagery He made use of in His teaching. As we read His parables and sayings, we see the peasants in the fields, ploughing, sowing, reaping; the shepherds, in a country where there are few fences and many rocks and holes, watching over their flocks and searching for sheep which have gone astray; the fishermen hauling the net full of fish to the shore and separating the useless fish from those which are to be sent to the market. Many a street scene is brought before us—children playing at marriages and funerals; beggars on their

way to the gates of rich men's houses to wait patiently for alms; debtors being taken off to prison at the request of a hard creditor. Life in the humble home of an Eastern village is vividly portrayed. We see the poky, ill-lit interior where the woman who has lost one of her ten coins must light a candle to search for it; the mother patching the old clothes of her boys and girls; the housewife at the baking board, leavening the fresh dough by mixing with it a piece of sour dough left over from the last baking; two women at the door of the house grinding corn by the quern (handmill). The profusion of such imagery in His parables and sayings is in itself sufficient evidence of the interest of Jesus in the varied activities of His fellows.

His interest, moreover, was not that of a mere onlooker. What impelled Him to get into touch with His fellows is disclosed in the story of His interview with the rich young ruler: "Jesus looking upon Him loved Him" (*Mark* 10.21). Love was the secret of His interest in the lives of His fellows. He "bore" their sicknesses on His loving heart that He might be their helper. He was the helper, too, of those who were losing heart in life's struggle. As their "joyous comrade" He brought to them the message of encouragement: Be of good cheer; be of good cheer. The tenderness of His love came to expression when He took the little children

in His arms, and "blessed them, laying His hands upon them." And His love was wide as it was tender. It went out to men and women who were shunned as outcasts from respectable society. It was wide as the needs of the children of the Father in Heaven, His Father and their Father. He was the brother of all the members of God's great family. He was dominated by the conviction that it was His God-given mission to be their helper. As He said of Himself, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (*Luke* 22.27). "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (*Matt.* 20.28). Love ever going out in service and sacrifice for His fellows was the secret of the life of Jesus the Lover of men.

For our present purpose we select two aspects of the love of Jesus for special consideration:

1. The greatness of what the Lover of men aims at securing for His fellows.
2. The suffering the Lover of men faces and endures that He may achieve what he aims at.

1. The greatness of the love of Jesus.

We are helped to an understanding of what Jesus aims at for His fellows if we have regard to what He has to say about (i.) the truly good life, (ii.) the fatherly love of God and (iii.) the Kingdom of God.

(i.) The truly good life.

Jesus finds the people with whom He comes in contact more or less intent upon being good Jews, intent especially upon the observance of the Jewish law as this had been set forth in their sacred scriptures and further developed in "the traditions of the elders." He aims at something higher for them than the mere observance of legal precepts. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (*Matt.* 5.20). He concentrates attention upon what they are in the inner life of the heart. It is here he finds the secret of blessedness: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." "Blessed are the pure in heart." A good heart is *the* thing which counts, *the* thing without which there can be no truly good life. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things; and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (*Matt.* 12.34–35). "There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man" (*Mark* 7.15). "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can

a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." (*Matt.* 7.17–18).

For Jesus a good heart is a heart inspired by love, by love which cannot but express itself in service to others.

To the question of the Scribe, "What commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answers: "The first is . . . 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' The second is this, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" (*Mark* 12.28–31). A lawyer comes to Jesus asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan, and then replies to the question about eternal life by saying to the lawyer, "Go, and do thou likewise" (*Luke* 10.25–37). It is by loving service to others Jesus estimates spiritual worth. After the ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee for high places in the Kingdom of God has produced ill-feeling in the other disciples, Jesus says to the twelve, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you; but whosoever would be great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all. For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to

give His life a ransom for many" (*Mark* 10.35-45). Very impressively does Jesus set forth His estimate of loving service in His picture of the Judgment. The Son of Man separates the individuals of the nations gathered before him, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The ground on which the separation takes place is the rendering or not rendering of service to those who are in need: "Come, ye blessed of my Father . . . *for* I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me . . . Depart from me . . . *for* I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (*Matt.* 25.31-46).

Not only does Jesus assign a supreme place to love, but He calls upon His disciples for love which can rise to exceptional heights. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?" (*Matt.* 5.46–47). "More than others," more than what is expected, more than is demanded by worthy conventional standards—that is the characteristic note in what Jesus

has to say about love as the ideal of the good life. He is aware that in making His demand for love of an exceptional strength He is an innovator. "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall impress thee to go one mile, go with him twain . . . Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven" (*Matt.* 5.38-40).

In His teaching on the forgiveness of wrongs and the renunciation of rights, Jesus is not laying down statutory rules for the organization of social life; He is setting forth ideals which can only be responded to where the impulse of "the good heart" is at work. It is on this impulse He puts the accent: "*Love* your enemies." What He is concerned with is that inward freedom from preoccupation with one's wrongs and one's rights which is secured by love, under whose constraint sensitiveness to one's wrongs and one's rights is overcome by devotion to a wider good, to a nobler life for oneself and for the offender.

In the emphasis which Jesus puts upon love and upon the heights to which it may rise He strikes a new note. It is true that parallels to this and the other precept of Jesus may be found in the Old Testament, in the teaching of the later Judaism, and in the writings of various ethical teachers in the Gentile world. But where are we to find a parallel to the fervour and persistence with which He concentrates attention upon love as the secret of a truly good life? His emphasis upon love as the ethical ideal is explicable only through His unique personality, through the wealth of love which was at work in His own heart. His personality is greater than His teaching. His recorded sayings about the supreme worth of love are but hints about the greatness of the reservoir of love from which they are the outflow. As has been said by a recent writer, "The message a man has to give radiates from him; it is never summed up in a sentence or two." * In considering the teaching of Jesus to His first disciples about love as the chief good, we cannot leave out of account the influence of His personality. Here the personality of the Teacher was their greatest lesson book. As scholars in the school of Jesus they were not merely listening to and accepting noble ethical precepts, they were being impressed and re-fashioned by an amazing love which laid

* Gilbert Murray, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 130.

its power upon them. It was the regenerating power of this love which made new men of them and equipped them for the work they were to do in after days. Contact with the personality of the Lover of men was the chief factor in " the training of the Twelve."

(ii.) The fatherly love of God.

Jesus aims at securing for His fellows a life inspired by heroic love; He also aims at securing for them a life rooted in filial fellowship with a God of love. These are not two different things; they are an indissoluble unity; where love is, there God is; and where God the ideal and inspirer of love is at work, there is the love-inspired life. If Jesus puts emphasis upon love as the secret of a truly good life, it is inevitable that He should put equal emphasis upon filial fellowship with God as a God of love.

For Jesus God is love. So He speaks habitually of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, as Father. That name for God is a suggestion to those who listen to His talks to think of God in the light of their experience of what a father and mother can be to their children, of what a father and mother can do and dare and suffer for their children, and to press that experience into their service for the understanding of the heart and will of God in His dealings with themselves. God's love for them surpasses the love of the best of fathers and mothers for their children. " If ye then, being

evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (*Matt.* 7.11). The world they live in is mysterious, but it is the world of God their heavenly Father. His fatherly love is at the heart of all things, is at work in all the happenings and experiences of their troubled life. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows" (*Matt.* 10.29-31). "Why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (*Matt.* 6.28-32).

Jesus has something further to say about this outgoing of the love of God to His children. A father is not satisfied with bestowing tokens of love upon his child; his deepest longing in bestowing such tokens of love is to foster the filial trust and devotion of his child in their

life of loving intimacy with one another. So for Jesus the fatherhood of God means that God in the outgoing of His fatherly love cannot rest till He has drawn His children into intimate loving fellowship with Himself. The longing in the heart of the father in the parable for the home-coming of his prodigal son is the picture Jesus draws of the longing in the heart of God for the home-coming of His estranged children. That His fellows may be drawn to their true home in God, that they may live as sons in intimate fellowship with their Father in heaven —that is what Jesus is aiming at, in all that He says about God's fatherly love. It is therefore fitting that to men and women who are ill at ease when they think of God He should again and again speak of the forgiving love of God. Such a picture as that of the forgiving love of the father in the parable is a message of hope to draw them Godwards: "While he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him . . . The father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (*Luke* 15.20-24).

Jesus is at pains to throw into relief the strength of the forgiving love of God. This

would be brought home to His hearers by the reason He adduces why they should love their enemies: "Love your enemies . . . that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (*Matt.* 5.44–45). Jesus sets forth the outgoing of the forgiving love of God to those who are His enemies as the ideal He has before him when He says to His hearers, "Love your enemies." They know, at least in some dim way, what love to an enemy means. They know that it involves their taking the initiative in striving to break down the enmity of the person who has wronged them, and by the power of love to win their enemy for a brother. They know enough of what the forgiveness of an enemy means to have new thoughts stirred within them of the forgiving love of God from whom they have been estranged.

In this emphasis by Jesus on the fatherly love of God, as in His emphasis upon love as the secret of a truly good life, we have something which is new, something which is not explicable by an appeal to what He may have owed to the Old Testament or to other sources. It is only explicable in the light of His unique personality, in the light of His unique experience of God. It is thitherward we are pointed by His own words: "No one knoweth the Son,

save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him" (*Matt.* 11.27). This is a startling claim, but, startling as it is, it is at the heart of His whole life and teaching. He lives and speaks as if He were habitually conscious of a unique experience of communion with His Father in heaven, of being in a unique way one with His Father in vision and love and will. In the Fourth Gospel we find sayings such as these: "I speak not from myself; but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (*John* 12.49). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me doeth His works" (*John* 14.9–10). "I and my Father are one" (*John* 10.30). These words may not be the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus; there is at any rate a profound harmony between them and what the first three Gospels tell us "concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach."

It is out of a unique experience Jesus speaks to His hearers about the fatherly love of God to incite them to let themselves be drawn into a life of filial fellowship with their Father in heaven. What gives its compelling power to His teaching is the impression produced upon them by the intensity of the life He Himself

lives in union and communion with the God of love. They become aware that this experience of God is the central reality in His own life. "The divine presence, the union with the Father, is about Him always, like the light and air, ambient, invisible, yet incapable even in thought of being away." * So His hearers have more than the words of the Teacher to set astir new and higher ways of thinking about God. Suggestions are flashed upon them as they come to realize what God must be to the Teacher Himself. His personality, expressing itself in His peace of heart, in His overflowing love, in His abounding joy and unconquerable hope, is a great lesson-book about the fatherly love of God.

(iii.) The Kingdom of God.

That Jesus so often and in so many different connections speaks of the Kingdom of God is significant. It is a reminder that while He is ever calling upon the individual to set before himself, as what is of supreme worth, a heart inspired by love and filial fellowship with the Father in heaven, He lays no less stress upon the life of brotherhood the individual may live amongst his fellows. No worthy individuality can be realized by the individual in isolation from his fellows. A love-inspired heart and filial fellowship with the one Father of all cannot but have its issue in the brotherly life

* R. W. Church, *The Gifts of Civilization*, p. 65.

of the Father's children. So Jesus is continually keeping the Kingdom of God in the forefront of His message. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God is a great good. It opens up a spacious field for drawing out what is best in man, for love-inspired service and sacrifice, for heroic struggles and achievements. Not only so, citizenship in the Kingdom of God means that the individual in his quest for the things most worth striving after gains reinforcement of strength and of hope through the backing up which comes to him from the abounding helpfulness of the comradeship of his fellow-citizens.

The people to whom Jesus spoke so often of the Kingdom of God were familiar, through the prophetic literature of the Old Testament and more especially through the later writings known as apocalypses (unveilings of the future), with inspiring dreams of the coming of a better time when the "sovereignty" or "reign" of the God of their fathers would be signally manifested in the bestowal upon the Jewish nation of political freedom and of prosperity and prestige. Jesus, too, had His dream of the coming of a better time, but it differed widely from the dreams cherished by His hearers. That was inevitable, for His vision of the Kingdom of God was the outcome of His unique spiritual experience. He interpreted the Kingdom of God in the light of His

convictions as to the supreme worth of love as the secret of a truly good life, and as to the fatherly love of God as the supreme reality at the heart of man's life and of the whole created universe. Dominated by such convictions, He could not but transform the commonly accepted conceptions of the Kingdom of God. The blessings of the Kingdom were not centred in the political freedom and the prosperity of the nation, but in what the individual was in his inner life, in his life of loving service to his fellows, and of filial fellowship with the Father in heaven. If love was the secret of a truly good life, the observance of the precepts of the Jewish law could no longer be essential for citizenship in the Kingdom of God. If God was above all the Father of His children, His fatherly love could not be pent up within the narrow bounds of the Jewish law ; it must flow forth upon all the children of God's great family. The universalism of the Kingdom was thus deeply rooted in the ruling convictions of Jesus.

In the light of these ruling convictions we can find an answer to the question whether Jesus conceived the Kingdom of God as something which had already come, or as something which would only be realized in the future. It had already come with the coming of Jesus, and was manifesting itself at work in lives renewed by the power of love and of filial

fellowship with the Father in heaven. When He was asked by the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said : " The kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (*Luke* 17.20–21. Margin of R.V.). But the Kingdom of God is also something to be realized in the future. The power of love and of fellowship with the Father in heaven has fuller victories yet to win. The Kingdom of God is an ideal, and it is the function of an ideal to be power not only to shape the present but also to lead on from present attainments to greater attainments that lie beyond. So Jesus taught his disciples to pray : " Our Father which art in heaven, Thy Kingdom come." Questions may be raised as to how Jesus pictured to Himself the coming of the Kingdom in the future. Such questions have their own interest, but they are not of prime importance. However they may be answered, it is our wisdom to keep steadily in view that what engrosses the interest of Jesus in His thought of the Kingdom, whether in the present or in the future, is the prime importance of love as the secret of a truly good life, and of filial fellowship with the God of love.

If Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God was the outcome of His own unique spiritual experience, and if it was through the

transforming power of His personality His fellows were to come by the spiritual dispositions indispensable for worthy citizenship, it would seem inevitable that He should regard Himself as called by God to occupy a unique place in the Kingdom and to discharge unique functions. That conviction of His God-given vocation goes back at least to the beginning of His ministry. It laid its power upon Him with exceptional pressure when He was baptized by John, and it was clarified and strengthened when "He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan." Henceforward there was no escape from the pressure of the conviction that the Kingdom of God, as He interpreted it, was at hand, and that leadership in the Kingdom was being laid by God upon Himself. So we read that after "John was delivered up, Jesus came unto Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (*Mark* 1.14–15). The Kingdom of God was at hand for the Leader in the Kingdom had come.

To be Leader in the Kingdom of God meant something more to Jesus than to be such a Messiah as many of His fellow countrymen were looking for. He believed, indeed, that His vision of the Kingdom of God was what prophets and writers of apocalypses had been groping towards in their dreams and hopes of better times for the Jewish people. But their

conception of the Messianic Kingdom and of Messiah was on a lower plane than His. If He was Messiah, He was Messiah *and more.* As Leader in the Kingdom of God, He regarded Himself as fulfilling the highest hopes which had gathered round the ideal figure of Messiah, but fulfilling them in unexpected ways. The Leader in the Kingdom of God was to tread a way of suffering love which no prophet or apocalyptic writer had associated with Messiah.* Jesus, therefore, could not but be reserved as to His claim to be Messiah. What He had first to concern Himself with was to get His hearers to understand what was involved in His own vision of the Kingdom of God and what the Leader in such a Kingdom must be. At the same time, He waited with eager anxiety for tokens of acknowledgment of Himself as Leader by those who had come to understand more or less clearly how revolutionary was His conception of the Messianic Kingdom. In the absence of such acknowledgment, how could He gain the fellow-workers without whose co-operation His vision of the Kingdom of God could not be realized? This anxiety of Jesus about the acknowledgment of His leadership is disclosed in the story of His interview with the Twelve in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. He asked His disciples, saying unto

* The suffering "Servant of the Lord" was not associated by the Jews with the expected Messiah.

them " Who do men say that I am ? And they told Him, saying, John the Baptist, and others, Elijah ; but others, One of the Prophets. And He asked them, But who say ye that I am ? Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ (Messiah) " (*Mark* 8.27-29). That acknowledgment lifted the load of anxiety from the heart of Jesus. Assured of the understanding of His vocation by those who had long been His close companions, and assured of their co-operation in service to the Kingdom of God as interpreted by Himself, He could look forward with renewed confidence to the future pregnant, as He foresaw, with conflict and suffering.

We have now seen what were some of the chief things Jesus the Lover of men sought to secure for His fellows. They were great things His love devised for them. He was ever longing that they should be sharers of His own love for their fellows, and of His own filial fellowship with their Father in heaven ; that they should be worthy citizens in the Kingdom of God, drawing upon its resources for evoking and strengthening all that was best in themselves, and setting themselves by their loyal service to make their individual contribution for the enrichment of those resources.

The Lover of men was a Believer in men, and He was a believer in men just in virtue of

His exceptional love for them. Exceptional faith was the twin-sister of exceptional love. The love of Jesus gave Him insight into the spiritual possibilities latent in every individual with whom He came in contact. So he dared to believe that to His call to His fellows to become sharers in a life like His own He might win a response in the most unlikely quarters. He despaired of no man.* His love drew Him to men and women who were regarded as too unworthy to deserve kindly and sympathetic attention. His question was not: Do they deserve my loving service? but this: Do they need my loving service? The Pharisees and Scribes were shocked by His habitual fraternizing with such people. They themselves could have been friendly with them *after* they had given up their evil ways, but the friendliness of Jesus with them while they were still sinners seemed to them to be imperilling moral interests. "They murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (*Luke* 15.2). Jesus explained the meaning of His seemingly strange conduct. It was zeal for moral interests which urged Him to get into touch with publicans and sinners, as the only way to lift them out of their evil ways. "What man of you having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them doth not

* Cf. the rendering of *Luke* 6.35, in the margin of the R.V., "Love your enemies and do them good . . . despairing of no man."

leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it . . . There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance." It belonged to the shepherd to have pity on the lost sheep. So it belonged to the vocation of Jesus to go out after the publicans and sinners until he found them; and that vocation He could fulfil, not by standing aloof from them till *they* took the first step by returning to better ways, but by drawing close to them with an undeserved love which would work in their hearts to quicken them into a new and better life.

Jesus was conscious that in receiving sinners and eating with them He was one in heart and will with His Father, that the love which inspired Him was the expression of the love of His Father. In the third parable He spoke to the Pharisees and the Scribes we have the story of a loving father and his wayward boy. The father of the parable is a picture of the love of Jesus for sinful men and women; it is a picture also of the love of God. God's fatherly love is ever besetting them; it is at work with them, while they are still in the far country. All that an earthly father can be to his estranged child—that, and more than that, is God to sinful men and women. This was a revolutionary thought about God and His relation to

man. "That God loves the sinner before he repents and while he is still a sinner, that He loves Israel's enemies even while they are enemies and act as enemies, is never suggested by any Old Testament, and hardly by any Rabbinic writer."* In this revolutionary thought about God we have a signal illustration of the unique spiritual experience of Jesus, of which the originality of His teaching was an outflow.

2. The strength of the love of Jesus.

In the preceding pages we have considered the great things Jesus aims at securing for His fellows. What He aims at securing for them is a disclosure of the greatness of His love. We go on to consider the strength of His love.

Jesus was conscious of the difficulties He would encounter in setting Himself to achieve what He aimed at. The story of His temptation in the wilderness suggests that He had brooded over these difficulties, and suggests also that in

* C. J. Montefiore, *The Old Testament and after*, p. 250. It is noteworthy how strongly this aspect of the life and teaching of Jesus has impressed several modern Jewish writers. In an earlier volume Mr. Montefiore had said: "To seek out the sinner and, instead of avoiding the bad companion, to choose him as your friend in order to work out his moral redemption. This was, I fancy, something new in the religious history of Israel . . . It inaugurated a new idea; the idea of redemption, the idea of giving a fresh object of love and interest to the sinner, and so freeing him from his sin. The rescue and deliverance of the sinner through pity and service—the work and method seem both alike due to the teacher of Nazareth." *The Religious Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 57, 58.

Cf. Israel Abrahams: "Pharisaism was inclined to leave the initiative to the sinner. . . . Jesus more inclined to take the initiative." *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, p. 58.

His brooding over them He was equipped with the power of a great mind as well as of a great heart. He was familiar with the sacred Scriptures of His people and with the ideals by which the Jewish religion of His day was dominated. He believed that in His conception of love as the secret of a truly good life and in His interpretation of the fatherly love of God and of the Kingdom of God He was bringing to its fulfilment the best that the great teachers and leaders of the people of Israel had throughout the centuries been straining towards. He believed also that many of His countrymen in His own day who had a commanding influence in the sphere of religion were in various ways blind to what was best in their ancestral faith, and that they were out of sympathy with His own ideals. It was inevitable, therefore, that He should be concerned with the problem of the relation of His own ideals to the currently accepted beliefs and practices of His contemporaries. He pondered the problem and thought it through to a clear issue. When He began His ministry, He was clear as to what He was called by His Father in heaven to be and do as Leader in the Kingdom of God. There might be few to understand Him, few to appreciate His ideals. He might have often to stand alone, understood by no one but His Father in heaven. In fulfilling his vocation He might have bitter experience of disappointments,

heart-aches, and opposition. He was resolved from the outset that whatever might befall Him He would be true to His vocation. In the tenacity of purpose which was at the heart of His ministry there was a disclosure of the exceeding strength of the love of this Lover of men.

For a time the youthful prophet of Nazareth aroused widespread enthusiasm amongst His countrymen in Galilee and elsewhere. They were attracted by His friendly bearing towards them, by His sympathetic interest in the life of their homes and in their daily work, by His readiness to be their helper in suffering and sorrow, by the charm of His talk, and by the sunniness of His personality. Besides, they were stirred by the hope that His presence amongst them was connected somehow with the coming of the new and better time for the Jewish people, which they had been led to associate with the advent of the promised Messiah.

It could not but be apparent, however, to those who came in contact with the prophet of Nazareth that, brotherly, sympathetic, and joyous though He might be, He was making imperious demands upon them. Startlingly strange sayings such as these gave them pause : " Enter ye in by the narrow gate ; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in

thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it" (*Matt.* 7.13–14). "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it" (*Mark* 8.35). "If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off" (*Mark* 9.43). "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all" (*Mark* 10.43–44). "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (*Matt.* 5.44). "Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (*Matt.* 5.39). "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (*Mark* 8.34). "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me" (*Matt.* 10.37). These were hard sayings; they sifted the hearers of Jesus. If they thrilled those who were of a heroic temper and evoked a glad response, they chilled the enthusiasm of others. This was not the kind of Kingdom of God they had been looking for. They could not rise to the demands which were being made upon them. Jesus gave expression to His disappointment in the parable of the Sower.

"He that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while, and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because

of the word, straightway he stumbleth. And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word, and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (*Matt.* 13.20-22). The Lover of men had experience of the hindrances in the hearts of His hearers to the realization of His vision of the Kingdom of God, but His experience of such failures did not avail to weaken His purpose. It deepened His sense of their need, and served to draw forth the strength of His love.

It was, however, in His conflict with the Pharisees and the Scribes the full strength of His love was disclosed. In the early days of His ministry their suspicions had been aroused by the things He said and the things He did, and these suspicions soon developed into resolute hostility. What alarmed them was the manifest tendency of His life and teaching to imperil the sacred interests of the Jewish law. They could have put up with His talks about the worth of a good heart, and about the fatherly love of God. But He emphasized these things in such an exaggerated way as not only to belittle, but to set aside, this and the other precept of their God-given law. He dared to put Himself above the authority of "the traditions of the elders," and even above that of the written law. Jesus, they believed, was undermining their Jewish religion. For them

the cause of God Himself was identified with the maintenance of the system of Judaism in the form in which it had been handed on to them. It had the authority of God behind it. To allow any part of it to be treated as of little or no importance was to be guilty of disloyalty to God. Jesus, in their estimation, was no true servant of God. Nor was He a true patriot. Now that the political independence of the Jews was gone, loyalty to the Jewish law was the one bond by which the Jewish people were bound together. To break with the Jewish law would be to pave the way for the disintegration of the national life, and to blast the hope of their Jewish faith ultimately gaining ascendency over the Gentile world. For reasons such as these, and in some cases at least for reasons less creditable, the Pharisees and the Scribes were in grim earnest with their hostility to Jesus and His attitude to the Jewish law.

Jesus could not give way before the rising storm. The great things His love aimed at for His fellows were at stake—the ideal of the good life as love, not as the observance of statutory precepts; the experience of God as a loving Father, not of God as essentially a Legislator and Judge; citizenship in a Kingdom of God in which the bond of union was loving service of its members to one another, not the observance of the precepts of the Jewish law.

His conflict with the Pharisees was inevitable.

His love for His fellows steeled Him to confront and endure whatever suffering the conflict might involve.

The steadily increasing opposition to Jesus had its centre in Jerusalem. His enemies were sending out emissaries to watch Him. The reports they received were driving them to make up their mind that in the interests of the Jewish faith and of the Jewish nation His career must be brought to an end. He was aware of the dangers by which He was menaced. From the beginning He had taken account of the possibility of the opposition of the religious authorities to His interpretation of the meaning of the Kingdom of God. He was familiar with the story of the treatment the prophets of old had received at the hands of the people to whom they delivered their message. It is doubtful, however, whether He had contemplated till towards the closing months of His ministry the probability of His own early and violent death. He was conscious that He was loyal to the Jewish faith, that however new His message might be He was but bringing to its full fruition all that was best in the Jewish religion. He might therefore well have hoped that the religious authorities would be sufficiently open-minded and great-hearted to respond to His message. His hopes were disappointed. The resolute hostility of the Pharisees and Scribes forced upon Him the conviction that His early

and violent death was imminent. After His momentous talk with the Twelve at Cæsarea Philippi and the utterance by Peter of the great confession : " Thou art the Christ," He " began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed " (*Mark* 8.31). The Son of Man must suffer. There was no way of escape, if He were to be loyal to His God-given vocation. It was God's mind concerning Him that His purpose of love for His children should be carried out, no matter what the cost might be. When Peter " took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall never be unto thee," He " turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art a stumbling block unto me ; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men " (*Matt.* 16.22–23).

In the months which followed this talk with His disciples Jesus was absorbed by the thought of His death. As Bengel has finely put it, *habitabat in sua passione.* But not for a moment did He regard His death as the end of His career. He had an unconquerable faith that His purpose of love for His fellows was the purpose of God and could not ultimately fail. He had, too, an unconquerable faith that after death He would be abidingly present with His disciples as their Leader and Life-giver in the Kingdom of God, and that the Kingdom of

God would come with power. His death He regarded as the means of realizing His life-aim. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." His death was no mere hard fate He had to endure; it would be a channel for the outflow of a love which would work with redeeming power upon the hearts of His fellows. So He not merely faced death with fortitude; He took it up into His life-plan. His love was strong enough to inspire Him not merely to accept His suffering and death submissively, but even to welcome them. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" (*Luke* 12.50). His love was to find itself in suffering borne for those who were loved.

The story of the Passion is a story of the love of Jesus. It is a story, indeed, of terrible suffering, but of suffering which love transmuted into a strange joy. In the Fourth Gospel the Man of Sorrows is set forth even in His last sufferings as at the same time a Man of Joy. "And now come I to thee; and these things speak I in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (*John* 17.13). "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled" (*John* 15.11). The secret of this joy of Jesus was love triumphing in and over suffering. "Without love the life that

love leads joyfully were full of pain." * The significance of the Passion of Jesus is its disclosure of the strength of His love. In His last hours what is uppermost in His mind is not what He may have to suffer, but the needs of others. At the supper in the upper room, when He refers to His approaching death, what He dwells upon is its service to His disciples. "This is my body, which is for you, (or, is broken for you)" (1 *Cor.* 11.24). On the *via dolorosa* when the women "bewailed and lamented Him," He turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (*Luke* 23.27–28). When He had been nailed to the Cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (*Luke* 23.34). The light of love shone forth from all His suffering.

The Cross was the crowning disclosure of the heart and will of Jesus. But for the Cross we should not have known the strength of His love. He was made "perfect through sufferings."

It is important to take special notice of what it was for which the strength of the love of Jesus disclosed in the Cross was put forth. The Pharisees and the Scribes were the main agents in the movement for bringing His career to an end. Worldly-minded Sadducees and priests, who dreaded a disturbance of the

* James Hinton, *The Mystery of Pain*, ch. 5.

existing order with which their self-regarding interests were bound up, had their share in the movement, especially in its later stages. But the hostility to Jesus was worked up chiefly by the Pharisees, the leaders of the earnest-minded and patriotic section of the Jewish people. The hostility of the Pharisees, as we have seen, was provoked by the attitude of Jesus to the Jewish law. At the trial before Pilate much was made of the claim of Jesus to be King Messiah. Naturally enough, for that was a charge to which the Roman Governor would attach importance. But, as far as the Pharisees were concerned, Jesus was brought to the Cross because He persisted in teaching that observance of the precepts of the Jewish law was not the ideal of the good life; that the fatherly love of God was not confined within the narrow bounds of the Jewish law; that the bond of citizenship in the Kingdom of God was not to be the Jewish law, but loving service of its members to one another and trustful filial fellowship with the one God and Father of all His children.

II

PAUL AND JESUS

CHAPTER II

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"AS long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration, as to the people who have had the sense for righteousness most glowing and strongest; and in hearing and reading the words Israel has uttered for us, carers for conduct will find a glow and a force they could find nowhere else. As well imagine a man with a sense for sculpture not cultivating it by the help of the remains of Greek art, or a man with a sense for poetry not cultivating it by the help of Homer and Shakespeare, as a man with a sense for conduct not cultivating it by the help of the Bible!" * In these words Matthew Arnold reminded his readers half a century ago that by Israel's best teachers goodness was assigned a supreme place in the religious life. This was the burden of the message of prophets like Isaiah and Amos. "To what purpose," so Isaiah represents God as addressing his countrymen, "is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? . . . Wash you,

* *Literature and Dogma*, p. 56.

make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment ; relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow " (*Is.* 1.11-17).

The teaching of the great prophets had a profound effect upon the national life. Its influence was manifest in the legislation under which the Jews were disciplined and moulded after their return from their exile in Babylon to the land of their fathers. In the law-book there were directions for religious ritual and for the preservation of their distinctive national customs, but side by side with them there were noble ethical precepts which showed that the message of the prophets had not been lost sight of. Directions about national customs, it may be justly said, had a part of their own to play in safeguarding the ethical monotheism which was the core of the prophets' message. In later times, especially after the struggle of the Jews under the leadership of the Maccabees against the attempt of their over-lord Antiochus Epiphanes to crush out Jewish ideals and bring the Jewish nation into line with the alien religious and ethical ideals of Hellenistic civilization, there was a growing tendency amongst the more earnest-minded Jews to fence themselves off from the Gentiles by additional safeguards. New expedients were adopted to make it more difficult for the Jews to have

intercourse with the Gentiles. "The Judaism of that time had no other aim than to save the tiny nation, the guardian of great ideals, from sinking into the broad sea of Gentile culture, and enable it, slowly and gradually, to realize the moral teaching of the prophets in civil life, and in the present world of the Jewish state and nation." * Such seems to have been one of the chief motives for the ever-increasing development of the oral law—"the traditions of the elders"—by the scribes or lawyers who were the representatives of the religious authorities.

This "fence" against the invasion of the corrupting influence of Gentile civilization was effective in safeguarding "the treasures of morality and religion" in Judaism. But it was attended with serious drawbacks. It weakened the appeal which the Jewish faith was making to earnest-minded Gentiles through the synagogues of the Jews of the Dispersion. The emphasis which was laid by the Jews on what were merely national, and not always attractive, customs was a stumbling block to Gentiles who were attracted by the monotheism and the high standard of domestic life which they associated with the synagogue to be found in the cities of a large part of the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere. There was a further drawback. Excessive devotion to the observance of precepts

* Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 376.

of the law about these national customs was not without injurious effect upon the Jewish faith itself. Concentration on the observance of the multitudinous precepts of the written and oral law, all alike regarded as imposed by divine authority, might go along with devotion to " the weightier matters of the law," but the temptation was ever present to lay the chief stress on the due observance of precepts bearing on national customs. That this temptation was not always successfully resisted, is vouched for by the story of the life and teaching of Jesus we have in the Gospels.

Paul served himself heir to the religion of his forefathers as interpreted in contemporary Judaism. As a Jew of the Dispersion he was brought into contact with the life and thought of the Gentile world. With his exceptionally alert mind he could not fail to be greatly interested in his environment. In a similar environment not a few of his fellow countrymen, notably in Alexandria the city of his contemporary Philo-Judæus, had been so powerfully influenced by contact with Greek thought and Greek civilization that they were disposed, while clinging to what they regarded as the essentials of their Jewish faith, to lay less stress on those aspects of it which were a stumbling block for their Gentile neighbours. Paul was no such " liberal " Jew ; he was an " orthodox "

Jew of the straitest sect. In spite of whatever knowledge he may have gained of Greek thought and civilization he was not tempted to become slack in his devotion to the whole system of Jewish law, written and oral. He made no sharp distinction between what was essential and what was not. To answer the question, how he became a Christian, it is therefore not a promising enterprise to search far afield beyond the influence exercised upon him by the Judaism of his day.

Paul the Pharisee was loyal to the Jewish faith as interpreted in the schools of the rabbis. He set himself with exceptional resoluteness to be a scrupulous observer of all the precepts of the Jewish law. But this has to be noticed, that a thirst for righteousness was at the heart of all his efforts to be blameless in his observance of the Jewish law. Here he was loyal to the genius of the religion of Israel. His supreme ambition was to be a good man. But the quest for goodness by a man of his exceptional ethical sensitiveness was made difficult by his whole-hearted acceptance of the prevalent, if not universal, conception of what constituted goodness. There was a tendency, more than a tendency, in the Judaism of his day to estimate goodness by the measure in which external obedience was rendered to the precepts of the law. It was along these lines Paul the Pharisee set himself to be a good man. As he said to

the Galatian Christians in later days: "Ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how . . . I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (*Gal.* 1.13-14). But along these lines he found himself baffled in his quest for goodness. A deep unrest of heart was the outcome.

He has himself disclosed to us the secret of that unrest in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, a chapter which is of quite capital importance for an understanding of Paul and Paulinism. In contrasting two ideals of the good life, obedience to the precepts of the law ("the oldness of the letter") and the outflow of the spirit of Christ ("newness of the spirit"), he gives us a precious fragment of autobiography. He recalls his own experience under "the oldness of the letter." In spite of all his strenuous and exceptionally successful efforts to render obedience to the precepts of the law he had to confess to himself that his quest for goodness had been a painful failure. Why this sense of failure, if he knew himself to be "blameless as touching the righteousness which is in the law?" His failure was not in the sphere of external obedience to statutory precepts, but in the sphere of the inner life. Obedience to precepts might go hand in hand with deep-seated evils in the heart, with hardness

and lovelessness, with self-righteousness and spiritual pride, with self-centredness and lack of sympathy with one's fellows. Paul was keenly conscious of the presence and power of this evil self, if not in the particular directions indicated, in similar directions. Over this evil self no observance of legal precepts, however punctilious, had availed to give him the victory. He had a vision of a higher kind of goodness than obedience to legal precepts, a vision of a goodness welling up from the heart and triumphing over the impulses of the evil self. The vision may have been dim, not well understood by himself, but it was something real; it had power to stir up a sore unrest in his heart. "I delight in the law of God (in the higher ideal of goodness of which he has caught sight) after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." "To will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise." "I am carnal, sold under sin." Paul has here got down to a level far deeper than that of obedience to any precepts of the law; he has got down to the very root of true goodness, to what a man is in the heart of him. Here he comes upon the secret of his impotence to do the good which he

would. He is not impotent to render obedience to the precepts of the law, but he is impotent to get the victory over his evil self. This is the explanation of his sore unrest. But for his exceptional ethical sensitiveness there would have been little ground for this unrest: he might well have been content with his blamelessness "as touching the righteousness which is in the law." It was his vision of something higher than such blamelessness which had reduced him to despair in his quest for goodness. And it was this vision which was responsible for his sense of being alienated from God, of being under God's condemnation. He thought of God as essentially Legislator and Judge. In view of his failure to reach the good life of which he had caught sight, what else could he believe but that the righteous Judge must condemn him? So there was wrung from his hot, despairing soul the cry: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

The attitude to the law which underlies the experience described here by Paul has been regarded as anomalous by Jewish scholars and by some Christian apologists for the Pharisees. How out of keeping, they say, it is with the author of such a Psalm as the hundred and nineteenth—a Psalm which may date from the beginning of the second century B.C. To the Psalmist the law is in no way a barrier between

him and God. It is through the law his fellowship with God is nurtured. "Let thy tender mercies come unto me that I may live: for thy law is my delight" (v. 77). Devotion to the law does not hinder the Psalmist from laying stress on the heart as the seat of true goodness: "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (v. 32). This is a different attitude to the law from that of Paul. But in the interval of at least two hundred years between the Psalmist and Paul there may well have been developed a tendency to regard the law and obedience to its precepts after a more external fashion than that of the Psalmist. Even in Paul's day there may have been devout Jews whose attitude to the law was similar to that of the Psalmist, but it is evident that many of the Jews had come to attach an exaggerated importance to a merely external obedience to the precepts of the law. Anyhow, however we may explain it, Paul the Pharisee *did* regard external obedience to the precepts of the Jewish law as the ideal of a truly good life. His failure along these lines to become the good man he longed to be plunged him into despair, and that despair was a preparation for the revelation of God's Son in him.

During the years when the exceeding zeal of Paul for the observance of the precepts of the Jewish law was having its issue in an increasing

inward unrest, Jesus of Nazareth was arresting the attention of His countrymen in Palestine. What He had to say about the secret of a truly good life struck a new note, attractive for many of His hearers, profoundly disturbing for others. We do not know how far, before the crucifixion, Paul knew of the life and teaching of Jesus, but it cannot have been long after the crucifixion that he came to know a great deal about it. His fellow-Pharisees in Jerusalem would probably be the chief source of his information. From the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, they had taken a special interest in what the " prophet of Nazareth " was saying and doing : they feared lest He might be a menace to the Jewish faith and to the Jewish nation. As their suspicions increased they sent agents to Galilee to watch Him and to report. The reports they were receiving hardened them in their hostility to Jesus, till at last they made up their minds that His career must be brought to an end. These were the men from whom Paul had his information about what Jesus said and did. It was only natural that they should single out what seemed to them to be certain to lead to a disastrous undermining of the Jewish religion. What they had to tell about Jesus may have included not a little which by itself would have made an appeal to a man like Paul. But anything of this attractive aspect of the life and teaching of

Jesus might easily receive little attention when so much was being made of what would be repellent to Paul, zealous for the traditions of his fathers, as well as to his fellow-Pharisees. He believed, and believed with an intense strength of conviction, that the precepts of the whole law, written and oral, were imposed upon the Jews by the authority of God, and that observance of every one of them was what he had to aim at if he were to be successful in his quest for goodness. He might have been prepared to admit a distinction between "the weightier matters" of the law and matters which were less weighty, but he was not prepared to admit that the less weighty matters could safely be regarded as of little or no importance: they were integral parts of one divinely authorized system. It is, therefore, not so very strange that he should have become a persecutor of the followers of the crucified Jesus whose attitude to the Jewish law was so radically antagonistic to his own. He was driven to take a prominent part in this dread work by his zeal for the Jewish law, for the religious, ethical and national interests which seemed to him to be indissolubly bound up with the maintainance of the Jewish law in all its integrity. The unrest in his own heart may have served to intensify his zeal as a persecutor. He may have dreamed that this unrest of his would be eased if, in defence of the interests

of the Jewish faith which were being imperilled by the followers of Jesus, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of persecution set on foot by his fellow-Pharisees.

In this frame of mind and with imperfect knowledge of what Jesus stood for, Paul came in contact with the followers of Jesus. If, as is probable, he had no first-hand knowledge of Jesus, he would see at least a reflection of His personality and teaching in the lives of His followers. We know that he had listened to the words of Stephen, "saw his face as it had been that of an angel," saw him kneeling down when he was being stoned, heard him cry with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Such a scene cannot but have made a deep impression upon Paul. Similar impressions would be made upon him as he went on with his task of "laying waste the church . . . entering into every house . . . and haling men and women . . . to prison" (*Acts* 8.3). From the followers of Jesus he may have come to know much more than he had learned from his fellow-Pharisees about Jesus the Lover of men, about His life and teaching and last sufferings, about the things which seemed to Him of such supreme worth that rather than tone down His message to conciliate the religious authorities He was prepared to endure whatever suffering might be inflicted upon Him, even the suffering of crucifixion. Anyhow, he cannot

have failed to take note of the intensity of the devotion of these persecuted men and women to the crucified and risen Jesus, of their radiant joy even under persecution, and especially of their evident possession of a peace of heart to which he himself was a stranger. Did he ask himself: What must Jesus have been to have had such an influence upon his followers? Did the asking of that question lead him on to his experience of "kicking against the goad"?

By the unrest in his own heart, by his increasing knowledge of what Jesus stood for, and by we know not how many other subtle influences at work, Paul was being prepared for the great crisis in his life. "The lightning of Damascus does not strike into empty space; it finds in the soul of the youthful persecutor inflammable material enough." *

The way by which Paul was brought to acknowledge Jesus as Lord was very different from that of Peter and his fellow-disciples. The latter, attracted by the announcement of Jesus: "The Kingdom of God is at hand," and by His winsome personality, responded to the call to be the companions of His ministry. At the outset they had but a vague conception of what discipleship with Jesus would involve. As they began to understand more clearly the bearing of His teaching about the good life and God and the Kingdom of God upon their own

* Adolf Deissmann, *Paulus*, p. 83.

preconceptions, they were perplexed: His teaching was so startlingly novel. But they put themselves to school with Jesus. Under the influence of His masterful, transforming personality they were being gradually attuned to His mind, till at last, more or less fully realizing what was involved in their discipleship, they could make the confession towards which Jesus had all along been leading them and for which He had been anxiously waiting: Thou art the Christ, Thou art our rightful Lord. Paul's knowledge of Jesus, as we have indicated, had been derived from fellow-Pharisees who concentrated attention on those aspects of His life and teaching which seemed to imperil the divinely authorized system of the Jewish law. Had his knowledge of Jesus been derived, like that of Peter and John, from intimate companionship with the Teacher, what might not have been the result? If he had had the chance of coming under the spell of His personality, of interpreting His attitude to the Jewish law in the light of His personality, might he not have found that Jesus was "speaking to his condition," might he, too, not have joined in Peter's confession: Thou art the Christ, Thou art my rightful Lord? That chance was not given to Paul. It was by another path he came to the acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord. He came to that acknowledgment with extraordinary suddenness. "A flood of spiritual

influence had been rising and rising at the door of his heart, but he kept the door rigidly closed: then suddenly the door gave way." *

What chiefly concerns us in this strangely sudden experience is to get some understanding of its meaning and its results. Paul himself describes his experience as the revelation of God's Son in him (*Gal.* 1.16). What that meant for him we can gather from such sayings of his as these: "God shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (*2 Cor.* 4.6). "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts" (*Rom.* 5.5). "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (*2 Cor.* 3.6). "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (the law of love) hath made me free from the law of sin and of death" (*Rom.* 8.2). The revelation of God's Son in him was an experience of the love of God flooding his heart and at the same time an experience of a great love for his fellows in whose purifying fire the impulses of his evil self were shrivelled up. The one experience involved the other. The love of God shed abroad in his heart had its inevitable issue in a love to man which ensured victory over the evil self, and love to man had its root in the love of God. As the author of the first epistle of John puts it: "Beloved, let us love one another: for

* Professor Percy Gardner, *The Practical Basis of Christian Belief*, p. 176.

love is of God ; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God ; for God is love " (1 *John* 4.7–8). " We love, because He first loved us " (1 *John* 4.19).

Paul's experience of the sudden overflowing of his heart with a tide of love may be illustrated by what we are told of the experiences of the saints. George Fox, speaking of one of his prolonged trances, says that he had been brought through " a very ocean of darkness and death into the greatness and infinitude of the love of God which cannot be expressed in words . . . an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness." * In *Grace Abounding* Bunyan tells us of a great day when there came to him a vivid sense of the love of God. " I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home. I could have spoken of his love and of his mercy to me to the very crows that sat upon the fields before me, had they been able to have understood me." Experiences such as these of Fox and Bunyan are exceptional. Still more exceptional was Paul's experience of the love of God. It could only have come to a man of exceptional ethical and religious susceptibility. In his essay on Shakespeare Walter Bagehot makes a pregnant remark : " To a great experience one thing is

* Quoted by Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church*, p. 225.

essential, an experiencing nature." * That Paul had in exceptional measure an experiencing nature is attested by what he tells of his unique experience under the law. It was to an experiencing nature the revelation of God's Son was made. But that was only a condition. His experience of the inrush of love did not have its source in himself and his experiencing nature, but in God and God's grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 *Cor.* 15.10).

It is in the light of Paul's experience of the inrush of a tide of love into his heart we have to interpret his whole Christian life, his Christian thinking as well as his Christian activities. Through this experience he found himself introduced into a new world, "a new creation." "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 *Cor.* 6.17). He compares what happened to him when God revealed His Son in him to what happened at the creation of the world when God said, Let there be light: "Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 *Cor.* 4.6).

Paul's experience of the inrush of love into his heart was the source of the gospel he preached. So he tells the Galatian Christians, when they were being led astray by Judaizing

* *Literary Studies*, I, p. 127.

Christians who asserted that he had no authority from the original apostles for preaching a gospel which disparaged the Jewish law. "For I made known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (*Gal.* 1.11–12). His experience when God revealed His Son in him, his experience of the love of God and of the spirit of love as the secret of a good life, made him sure that Christ was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. He emphasizes the close connection between his initial experience as a Christian and his preaching to the Gentiles a gospel set free from bondage to the Jewish law. "It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (*Gal.* 1.15–16). In that experience of the revelation of Jesus Christ he found the authority for the gospel he preached. He sought no other authority; he needed no other. "I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me" (*Gal.* 1.16–17). He goes on to explain that it was only three years afterwards he went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter, and that it was fourteen years after that visit he paid his next visit to Jerusalem. So resolute was he in insisting that the gospel he preached was rooted in his

experience of the revelation of God's Son in him. To use modern phraseology, in that experience he found essential Christianity. And in his whole life of activity as an apostle it was his one dominating aim to bring his fellows to be sharers in the great experience which had come to himself "through the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Jesus Christ had a central place in the experience of Paul as a Christian. That was inevitable. It was through Christ there came an answer to his cry: "Who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" It was of this answer he said: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Rom.* 7.24–25). His experience of deliverance from the tyranny of his evil self and from the sense of condemnation by God was the experience to which Jesus was ever intent upon drawing His countrymen in Palestine when He spoke to them of love as the secret of the truly good life and of the fatherly love of God. And from the beginning of his Christian career to its end Paul was ever striving to identify himself more and more completely in vision and love and will with Jesus the Lover of men. It was of no Christ of apocalyptic or speculative imagination, but of the Jesus of history he said: "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith,

the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (*Gal.* 2.20).

Living his life in fellowship with the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself up for him, Paul could not think of the Jesus of history apart from His sufferings and death. Before his conversion he knew from his fellow-Pharisees that Jesus in His ministry had so emphasized love as the secret of a good life and fatherly love as the deepest thing in the character of God that the interests of the Jewish law were imperilled. He knew that that was why his fellow-Pharisees were determined to bring His career to an end. He knew that Jesus, rather than slacken in His vocation to bring His fellows to be sharers in His own experience of the fatherly love of God and of His love for others, dared to confront and endure the Cross. They were great things the love of Jesus aimed at for His fellows, and in the Cross He proved with what strength of love He clung to His purpose. When God revealed His Son in him, Paul became a sharer in the great things for which Jesus lived, and for which He gave Himself up on the Cross. He could not therefore but give to Christ in His Cross the central place in all his thinking and activity.

In the following six chapters we are to consider how Paul relates the Cross of Christ to several aspects of Christian experience.

CHAPTER III *

THE CROSS AND THE ETHICAL IDEAL

IN the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians there is no direct reference to the sufferings and death of Jesus, but it may not be inappropriate to make this our starting point in considering Paul's interpretation of the ethical ideal in the light of the Cross.

The context in which this hymn in praise of love is introduced is worthy of special notice. In the immediately preceding chapter Paul has been dealing with a specific situation in the Christian community at Corinth. Troubles had arisen about the relative worth of various spiritual gifts such as " speaking with tongues " (ecstatic and unintelligible utterances of exceptionally emotional worshippers), and " prophecy " (the gift of edifying the Christian community with inspired and intelligible speech). This and the other member of the community was pressing for larger opportunities of exercising his special gift in the meeting for common worship, and was showing lack of

* In this chapter I have borrowed somewhat freely from what I have written elsewhere: *The Spiritual Genius of St. Paul*, ch. 6, and *The Faith of St. Paul*, ch. 10.

thoughtfulness about other members having opportunities of exercising their special gifts. So friction ensued and unseemly tempers were displayed. Paul is deeply stirred when he learns how the peace of the Christian community has been disturbed and its well-being brought into grave peril. He reminds the readers of his letter that each of them has a special spiritual gift from the one spirit of Christ ; that as the natural (physical) body is one and has many members, each of which functions to make its special contribution to the well-being and efficiency of the whole body, so also should it be with the body of Christ and its members. " Whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it " (1 *Cor.* 12.26). But suddenly Paul breaks away for the moment from the line of argument which he has been pursuing in the twelfth chapter and will resume again in the fourteenth, and lets himself go in an impassioned outburst about the supreme worth of that love which is the only true cure for the egotism, the pride, the envy, the jealousy, the selfishness, the ill-temper which are at the root of the troubles in the Christian community. " A more excellent way I show unto you "—the way of love.

In the middle of the thirteenth chapter there are four verses of exceptional interest. They

take us back to Paul's own experience when the sudden inrush of a tide of love set him free from the evil self and its impulses which forced from him the cry: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death." It is these impulses of the evil self which are disturbing the peace of the Christian community at Corinth. From the tyranny of the evil self love is the way of escape.

Love is not impatient with others: "love suffereth long and is kind." Love is not grudging in its appreciation of the gifts of others: "love envieth not." Love does not boast of one's own particular gift: "love vaunteth not itself." Love does not give itself airs about such a gift: "love is not puffed up."

Love does not fail in thoughtful consideration for others: "love doth not behave itself unseemly." Love is not intent upon selfish interests: "love seeketh not its own." Love does not give way to ill-temper: "love is not provoked." Love does not brood over wrongs: "love taketh not account of evil."

Love has no secret satisfaction when others go wrong: "love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness." Love delights in whatever good is done by others: "love rejoiceth with the truth."

Love says little about the failings of others: "love beareth (or covereth) all things." Love has faith in the better self of others: "love

believeth all things." Love hopes for the best from them: "love hopeth all things." Love is patient with all their failures and annoyances: "love endureth all things."

In the first three verses of the chapter Paul speaks with an arresting decisiveness about the absolute worth of love in comparison with anything else that may belong to the Christian life. Love is of higher worth than religious emotion expressing itself in the inarticulate speech described as "speaking with tongues," or in edifying articulate speech. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." Love is of higher worth than spiritual insight and heart-stirring eloquence, than wide knowledge of divine things, than power to accomplish what is seemingly impossible. "If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Love is of higher worth than will-force, divorced from love, which enables a man to do extraordinary service to the poor and to achieve great feats of self-mastery and self-sacrifice. "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

In the latter part of the chapter the contrast between love and knowledge is still further

accentuated. "Love never faileth . . . whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." Love is one of the trinity of graces which "abide," and the greatest of these is love. Knowledge is "the second, not the first"; it is but the handmaid of love—the good which is of eternal worth.

Elsewhere in his epistles Paul's conviction about love as the absolute good again and again comes to expression. In his enumeration of the fruits of the spirit love has the first place (*Gal.* 5.22). To the Galatian Christians he says: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (*Gal.* 5.6). To the Corinthian Christians he says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love" (1 *Cor.* 16.13–14). To the Roman Christians he says, "Owe no man anything, save to love one another . . . Love is the fulfilment of the law" (*Rom.* 13.8-10). To the Colossian Christians he says: "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (*Col.* 3.12-14).

This magnifying of love as the ethical ideal

was the direct outcome of Paul's experience when it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in him. Up till then his ethical ideal had been the observance of the precepts of the Jewish law. After the sudden inrush of a tide of love into his heart he could not but have done with his old ideal, and have done with it decisively. Henceforth he identified himself passionately with what Jesus had to say about love as the secret of a truly good life.

The ethical ideal of Jesus was closely identified with His Cross. It was because He so magnified the absolute worth of love as to belittle the worth of the observance of this and the other precept of the Jewish law that the Pharisees and Scribes resolved to bring His career to an end. Rather than abate the unusual emphasis He put upon love He set Himself, with full consciousness of what it might involve, to confront and endure the sufferings which were to culminate in His crucifixion. By the Cross He sealed the witness borne by His whole life and teaching to the supremacy of love as the ethical ideal.

This was an aspect of the Cross which laid its power upon Paul. What rivets him in the sufferings and death of Jesus is the amazing strength of the love which is there disclosed: "The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself up for me." Love to the uttermost for His fellows, love to the uttermost for Paul

himself, is what he sees in the Cross of Jesus. He cannot get away from the thought of the sufferings and death of his Lord. It is continually emerging in his letters. For example: "God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 *Thess.* 5.9–10). "The Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age" (*Gal.* 1.3–4). "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 *Cor.* 5.15). "While we were yet enemies Christ died for us" (*Rom.* 5.8). "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (*Rom.* 5.10). "You . . . now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (*Col.* 1.21–22).

The suffering, self-sacrificing love of Jesus which came to its supreme expression in the Cross enters deeply into Paul's interpretation of the Christian ethical ideal. Jesus Himself had left His disciples in no uncertainty about this. "When they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem," He "began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him." Little understanding what He meant, the sons of Zebedee said to Him: "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on

Thy left, in Thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink ? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ? And they said unto him : We are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink ; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized " (*Mark* 10.32-39). At an earlier period Jesus had " called unto him the multitude with His disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it " (*Mark* 8.34–35).

In this sense Paul set himself to be a sharer in the Cross of Christ, to be himself a cross-bearer. To drink the cup that Jesus drank, to be baptized with the baptism with which Jesus was baptized, to tread the royal way of the Cross which Jesus had trodden, to be constrained by the love which was at the heart of the sufferings and death of Jesus—that was Paul's supreme ambition. Again and again his longing to be conformed to the love of the suffering and dying Jesus finds forceful expression. " I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming

conformed to His death" (*Phil.* 3.8–10). "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God; we are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (*2 Cor.* 4.7–11). What Paul says to the Galatians about the secret of his life as a Christian: "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God," is introduced with the striking statement: "I have been crucified with Christ" (*Gal.* 2.20). At the heart of his life of faith is this identifying of himself with the crucified Jesus, this sharing in the love of the crucified Jesus. Elsewhere he speaks of the Christian life as a dying and rising with Christ. It is possible, as some New Testament scholars believe, that this phraseology may have been suggested to Paul by phraseology current in Gentile religious cults with which readers of his epistles would be familiar. But the meaning he attaches to the phraseology is all his own. To die and rise with Christ is to share in the love by which the life of the crucified and risen Jesus was inspired. Such dying and rising

with Christ, as he says in the Epistle to the Romans, is the meaning of Christian discipleship. He finds members of the Christian community excusing themselves for slackness in their ethical life by what Paul has himself told them of God's abounding grace. "Shall we continue in sin," so he reasons with them, "that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (*Rom.* 6.1-6). In such a passage there are modes of expression which may puzzle a modern reader: Paul's thought-forms are not ours. But what he is here pressing home is in the main clear enough. The fact that the God with whom they have to do is a God of grace is no excuse for ethical slackness. When they became disciples of Jesus Christ their Lord and received baptism as the seal of their Christian discipleship, they were committed to a never-ending

struggle to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, to let themselves be mastered by a love like that of the crucified and risen Jesus. In the Cross of Christ they were to recognize the ethical ideal which was henceforth to be their guiding light amid the trials and temptations of their daily life. It was to a Christlike life they had been called by the God of grace.

To Paul, then, the ethical ideal of the Christian is love like that of Jesus the Lover of men which came to its supreme expression in His sufferings and Cross. Here his teaching is illumined by his own life as an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles.

As a Pharisee Paul had evidently brooded over the spiritual condition of the Gentiles and longed to be their helper. He may have had his dreams of playing a great part in attracting through the synagogues of the Dispersion, increasing numbers of the Gentiles to the Jewish faith and to the observance of the Jewish law, but he must have known how great an obstacle in the way of the Gentiles identifying themselves with the Synagogue was created by many of the peculiar precepts of the Jewish law. Through the revelation of God's Son in him new light was suddenly thrown upon the pressing problem of the Gentile world. He discovered that the secret of a truly good life was not obedience to the precepts of the

Jewish law, but love like that of the crucified Jesus. Under the power of that love he went forth to his life-work as a preacher of Christ to the Gentiles, assured that where the appeal of the traditional Jewish religion had failed, the appeal of Jesus the Lover of men would evoke a response.

Love opened his eyes to the infinite worth of individual men and women in the Gentile world. He

> Saw into the depths of human souls,
> Souls that appear to have no depth at all
> To careless eyes.*

His treatment of individuals for whom almost no one had a good word to say is set forth with extraordinary vividness in the briefest of all his epistles—the incomparable Epistle to Philemon. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon who was a member of the Christian community at Colossæ in Western Asia Minor, had run off after defrauding his master and had somehow found his way to Paul in his prison at Rome—drawn thither, it may be, by what he had heard in the Christian household of his master about the queer kindliness of Paul's ways. Paul's sympathy went out to the " good-for-nothing " runaway. Under the spell of Paul's faith in in him, of Paul's love for him, he became another man, a " good-for-something " disciple

* Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. XIII, 166-168.

of Paul's Master. In his letter to Philemon Paul speaks of him as "a brother beloved," as "my own heart." "If thou countest me as a partner, receive him as myself." To such issues did Paul's individualizing love work.

Paul gives his best, his best in mind as well as in heart, to the Gentiles with whom he comes into contact, and especially to the members of the Christian communities of which he was the founder. To the Thessalonian Christians he says: "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were pleased to impart unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear unto us" (1 *Thess.* 2.8). The people to whom he thus gives himself were once strangers to him; mostly humble folk, and all of them below his own level of intelligence and culture. To the Christians of Corinth, amongst whom there were "not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," he speaks in a similar strain: "Ye are in our hearts to die together and live together" (2 *Cor.* 7.3). This masterful, forceful man brought to these humble Gentiles a love as tender as it was strong. "We dealt with each of you as a father with his own children, exhorting you and encouraging you" (1 *Thess.* 2.11). "We were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children" (1 *Thess.* 2.7).

Paul's converts sometimes took up an attitude to their spiritual father which pained him to the quick. But his love was long suffering. The Galatians, too easily carried away by the plausible insinuations of Judaizing Christians bent on undermining the influence of one whom they regarded as a traitor to the Jewish religion, were disposed to mistrust him, to have doubts as to whether he was really a genuine apostle of Jesus Christ. He was disturbed by this change of attitude towards himself, through whom they had learned about Jesus and become His disciples. But love triumphed over resentment. His one concern was to bring them back to their old allegiance. "My little children, of whom I am once again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (*Gal.* 4.19).

He was sorely disturbed, too, by an outbreak of disaffection amongst the members of the Christian community at Corinth. Again Judaizing Christians were the fomenters of the disaffection. They had been insinuating to the Corinthians that Paul was lording it over them with his domineering temper; that as for his boast about earning his own livelihood by the work of his hands that he might not be burdensome to the Christian community, what was that but a virtual acknowledgment that he had no right, as a genuine apostle would have had, to look to the Christian

community for his support? They were even making the further insinuation that he was diverting to his own personal use money which had been contributed for other purposes. Again love triumphed over resentment. To win back his disloyal converts to a better mind he lays bare the secret of his life as a Christian as he has done nowhere else with an equal fullness and frankness. He appeals to them out of the overflowing love of a big heart. "Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto children), be ye also enlarged . . . Open your hearts to us . . . we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man. . . . I say it not to condemn you: for I have said that ye are in our hearts to die together and live together" (2 *Cor.* 6.11–13, 7.2–3). In all his handling of mischief-making detractors Paul was constrained by love like that of the crucified Jesus.

Love like that of the crucified Jesus was the secret of the stern joy with which Paul confronted and endured his abounding sufferings. Jesus, contemplating what lay ahead of Him in His last days at Jerusalem, had said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be

accomplished!" (*Luke* 12.50). So Paul not only submitted to, but even welcomed, the sufferings in which the fulfilment of his vocation involved him. They brought him opportunities of an increased share of the suffering and self-sacrificing love of Jesus and an increased share of the joy hidden in the heart of such love. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, that the strength (the love) of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 *Cor.* 12.9.10). "I overflow with joy in all our affliction" (2 *Cor.* 7.4). "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church" (*Col.* 1.24). Even in the prospect of a martyr's death Paul could find occasion for rejoicing in his sufferings. "Yea, and if I am offered (poured out as a drink-offering) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: and in the same manner do ye also joy, and rejoice with me" (*Phil.* 2.17–18). As a soldier of the Cross Paul is the Happy Warrior:

> Who, if he be called upon to face
> Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
> Great issues, good or bad, for human kind,
> Is happy as a lover; and attired
> With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.

Love like that of the suffering and crucified Jesus is the final explanation of Paul's success as a preacher of Christ to the Gentiles. The burden of his message was "Christ and him crucified." In the Cross was the revelation of the depths to which the love of God could stoop for man's sake, and the revelation of the heights to which man could rise in his quest for a worthy life. In the light of the strength of Paul's suffering and self-sacrificing love the Gentiles had the clue to the meaning of what he had to tell them about the Cross of Christ; about the grace of God and about the new life to which the God of Grace was calling them. Paul's love-inspired life was the interpreter of the Cross of Christ.

CHAPTER IV

GOD INTERPRETED THROUGH THE CROSS

A REVOLUTION in Paul's conception of the ethical ideal was intertwined with a revolution in his conception of God.

To Paul the Pharisee God was first and foremost the God of conscience, the God who confronted him in the sphere of duty; and this God was the dominant reality in his life. His interpretation of the character of God had been determined by the atmosphere of legalistic Judaism in which he had been brought up. God was essentially the righteous Lawgiver and Judge. To win God's favour and be admitted to intimate fellowship with God, it was indispensable that he should render obedience to the multitudinous rules for a good life which God Himself had laid down in the Jewish law, written and oral. All his earnest and never-ending struggle to win God's favour along that line had its issue in the despairing cry: "O wretched man that I am!"

With the revelation of God's Son in him there came the discovery that the God who was confronting him in conscience was no mere

Legislator and Judge; that He was a loving Father, the outgoing of whose love was not conditioned by his obedience to the precepts of the Jewish law, a loving Father who enwrapped him, sinful man as he was, in a Father's love for his erring, estranged child. This experience carried with it a new interpretation of the character of God, a new interpretation of the heart and will of God towards sinful man. Henceforth he was mastered by the conviction that love was the greatest thing in God. If he speaks of the love of God as the grace of God, that is explicable by his experience under the law. He had been obsessed by the idea that the outgoing of God's love was not unconditional but had to be merited by works of his own, by his obedience to the precepts of the law. When God revealed His Son in him he had experience of the outgoing of God's love to him altogether irrespective of any merits of his own, small or great. The love of God, of which he had experience in that hour, was absolutely unmerited love. So Paul was wont to speak of it as the grace of God.

Paul was deeply conscious that it was to Jesus he owed his new interpretation of the character of God. His initial experience of the grace of God was mediated through Jesus; it was a revelation of God through His Son. So for Paul the God of grace is ever the God

and Father of his Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God is, in Paul's thought, inseparable from Jesus; it is "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Rom.* 8.39).

Where did Paul find the revelation of "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus?" He found it, of course, in his initial experience as a Christian, but that experience was mediated through his knowledge of Jesus, of what He did, of what He taught, of what He was. The whole life of Jesus was for Paul a revelation of the love of God. Here the teaching of Jesus about the fatherly love of God had its place, but Paul seems to have been specially impressed with the revelation of the love of God in His life. Jesus Himself believed that His love for His fellows was the expression of the love of His Father in heaven. So Paul found the revelation of the love of God in the life of Jesus; in the love of Jesus which overflowed wherever He found His fellows in need of a brother's help, whether they were Jews or Samaritans or Gentiles; in the love of Jesus for sinful men and women which provoked the Pharisees and Scribes to murmur, "saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Very specially did Paul find a revelation of the love of God in the love which inspired Jesus to confront and endure the sufferings and death in which loyalty to His vocation as the Saviour of His fellows and

their Leader in the Kingdom of God involved Him. So he cannot help linking his thought of the love of God with the death of Jesus. "While we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (*Rom.* 5.6-8). "If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things" (*Rom.* 8.31–32). As the Cross is for Paul the supreme disclosure of the ethical ideal, so is it the supreme disclosure of the heart and will of God towards man, of His suffering and self-sacrificing love for man.

Paul is dominated by the conviction that in Jesus, in His personality and life and Cross, he is in touch with God; that in Jesus he has found the true character of God, the heart and will of God towards His children. Jesus the Lover of men is the image of God. "The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 *Cor.* 4.4). "The Son of his love . . . who is the image of the invisible God" (*Col.* 1.14–15). Jesus is the mirror from which the character of God is reflected. "It is God . . . who shined in our

hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 *Cor.* 4.6). This is the great thought expressed in the peculiarly Pauline phrase, "God in Christ." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 *Cor.* 4.19). Paul as a Christian cannot think of God except as His heart and will have been interpreted for him by Christ. So we find that with no perceptible difference of meaning he speaks now of the grace of God and now of the grace of Christ, now of the spirit of God and now of the spirit of Christ, now of the power of God and now of the power of Christ. Especially noticeable is the way in which he expresses his sense of the unique oneness of Jesus with God when he speaks of the divine indwelling in the soul of man. Instead of saying "God in me," he says, "Christ in me," or more often, "I in Christ." His life as a Christian he describes in these pregnant words: "Christ liveth in me" (*Gal.* 2.20).

"God in Christ" is the sum and substance of Paul's theology (his doctrine about God) and of his Christology (his doctrine about Christ). To the question: What is God? Paul's answer is: Christ is the image of God; what Christ is in heart and will, that God is. To the question: What is Christ? Paul's answer is: Christ is the revealer of the heart and will of God. The answers to these two

questions are fundamental in all his thinking about God and about Christ. They ought to be fundamental in all theological and Christological thinking which is grounded on Jesus Christ, on His life and personality, on His teaching and on His Cross.

Paul's new interpretation of God came to him in the sphere of conscience; through his own personal experience of his discovery of the heart and will of the God with whom he was confronted in conscience. His experience of God in Christ in his own individual soul flashed new light upon problems which had held his interest. By the God within he interpreted the God without, the God who was at work in the life of humanity and in the whole created universe.

As a Pharisee loyal to a noble strain in his Jewish faith Paul had a strong sense of the presence and power of God in the history of humanity. He believed that God, the Legislator and Judge, was at work with individuals and with nations; that God had made special choice of the people of Israel, not only for their own sake, but also for the service they might render to the Gentiles. He believed also that obedience to the Jewish law, written and oral, divine in its origin and authoritativeness, was the standard by which God would estimate the worth or unworth of Gentiles as well as Jews; that is, he believed that God in His

dealings with men could not but be bound to the Jewish law.

As a Christian Paul believed more intensely than ever that God was working out His own great purpose in the life of nations as well as of individuals but in the light of his discovery of God in Christ his interpretation of that purpose was revolutionized. "Is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of the Gentiles also?" (*Rom.* 3.29.) The fatherly love of God was not limited by the Jewish law. It was pressing in upon the hearts of all His children, whether Jews or Gentiles, and what God demanded of His children, Jews or Gentiles, was not the observance of the Jewish law, but a Christlike love for their fellows. With the coming of Jesus the Lover of men, who was ever insisting upon the fatherly love of God and upon love as the secret of a truly good life, there came a new starting point in the working out of God's purpose with the human race. So profoundly was Paul convinced of this that he speaks of Jesus as the second Adam, the Head of a new humanity, its inaugurator and life-giving spirit. Jesus was the goal to which the whole history of humanity had been leading up. "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (*Gal.* 4.4). Jesus was the goal of the past history of humanity and the starting point for its future. In the whole history of humanity Paul saw the working out

of the purpose of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; he saw the love of God at work in the life of every individual member of His great human family and in all the happenings in the life of the nations. Paul had his philosophy of history, and at the heart of that philosophy was his experience of God in Christ.

Paul was interested not only in the meaning of the history of humanity, but also in the meaning of the created universe. If a philosopher is a thinker given to brooding over the meaning, the ultimate reality, of the world in which the life of men is lived, there was a distinct strain of the philosopher in Paul. Whatever may have been the result of his philosophical brooding while he was still a Pharisee, his interpretation of the ultimate reality in the universe was profoundly affected by his personal experience of "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."

When Jewish thinkers with a bent for philosophizing, like the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon*,* contemplated the multiplicity and grandeur of what they saw in the world in which they lived, they were moved to say: Divine Wisdom is at the heart of all things. Stoic philosophers summed up the results of

* The date of this book, one of the most interesting of the Apocrypha, is about 100 B.C. New Testament scholars are pretty well agreed that Paul was not only familiar with The Wisdom of Solomon, but has made use of his knowledge of it in his epistles.

their contemplations in a somewhat similar formula: Reason (thought or intelligence) is at the heart of all things. Jewish thinker and Stoic philosopher, starting from what they reckoned of highest worth in human life, concluded that in such highest worth was to be found the ultimate source from which all things have come forth, or, at least, in which they have their meaningfulness. When Paul broods over the meaning of the created universe, he starts from what has been the greatest reality in his experience and comes to the sublime conclusion: The love of God, revealed in the life and Cross of Jesus, is at the heart of all things. That is the thought to which he gives expression in the epistle to the *Colossians*: "Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible; whether thrones or dominions or principalities; all things have been created through him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (*Col.* 1.15-17). What Paul is here concerned with is not to set forth the uniqueness of the person of Christ, but to set forth the character of God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe; to express his conviction that the love of God in Christ is the explanation of the creation of the universe, the explanation of the purpose which God is working out with

the created universe, the explanation of the goal for which the travail of the whole created universe is making.*

What Paul says about all things having been created through Christ and unto Christ is the outcome, not of speculation about the mysteries of the Godhead, but of a spiritual intuition springing from his experience of "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." In this connection Jesus is for Paul the wisdom of God, the wisdom the quest of which is the task of the philosopher. We may call it Paul's philosophy, but if it is philosophy, it is philosophy which appeals to the human heart. It has liberating power for every one who is perplexed with "the mystery of this mysterious world," who is oppressed with fear of the world, who is tempted to take flight from the world and its concerns and withdraw into his own narrow individual life. It is a heartening answer to such disturbing questions as these: is the world in which we find ourselves a friendly world which we can turn to account for the furtherance of what we reckon of highest worth in our life, or is it indifferent, or

* Paul's thought of God's love at the heart of the created universe has been expressed by Tennyson and by Browning:

> Who trusted God was love indeed
> And love Creation's final law.
> "In Memoriam," LVI.

> The very God! think Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-great, were the All-loving too.
> "Epistle of Karshish."

even hostile, to us and to our dearest interests? What is behind it all? The all-embracing dominance of mere unintelligent power, or divine wisdom? Blind fate, cruel necessity, or the love of a Father who cares for His children and whose purpose of love for them is working at the heart of all life's happenings and sufferings?

For Paul this world is the world of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its ultimate reality is the love of God in Christ. Love called it into being, love reigns in it, love's purpose is guiding it. God, the loving Father, gives the world to His children as their possession to be used for the furtherance of life's highest interests. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours and ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's" (1 *Cor.* 3.22–23). "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good" (*Rom.* 8.28).

This was Paul's unconquerable faith. The longer he lived under its power and the severer were the tests to which it was subjected in his "right sore fighting life," so much the stronger did it become. It was in the closing years of his life he gave expression to this ever-strengthening faith of his in the triumphant outburst: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,

nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord " (*Rom.* 8.38–39).

CHAPTER V

WHAT PAUL MEANS BY THE WRATH OF GOD

PAUL speaks once and again of the wrath of God. How are we to co-ordinate his conception of the wrath of God with his conception of "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" That is the question we are to attempt to answer in the present chapter.

From our experience of human life we know that sin is often followed by certain unhappy consequences for the sinner. These unhappy consequences may be described as divine reactions against sin, or as expressions of God's hostility to sin, of God's wrath against sin.

Three different kinds of these unhappy consequences of sin may be singled out for notice.

1. Physical suffering.

There is some connection between sin and physical suffering, but a limited connection. The suggestion, put forward in various quarters and in various forms, that all suffering is due to the sin of the sufferer may be a laudable attempt to solve the problem of the existence

of suffering in a world created and governed by a good God, but it is hopelessly discredited by the facts of life. Some of the greatest sufferers belong to the order of the saints, and some of the greatest sinners " are not in trouble as other men are ; neither are they plagued like other men " (*Ps.* 73.5). Exceptional love may have its issue in exceptional suffering, and exceptional hard-heartedness may have its issue in exceptional freedom from suffering. But there *are* physical sufferings which are the direct and inevitable consequences of the sinner's evil courses. Such sufferings may be interpreted in different ways. They may be regarded as the means which the fatherly love of God makes use of to awaken His erring children to a sense of the evil of their wrong doing, to bring them to " heart-sorrow and a clear life ensuing." The turning point in the career of the prodigal son was " when he began to be in want." " When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight ; I am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants " (*Luke* 15. 14-19). On the other hand, if the relations between God and the sinner are construed more after the analogy of a judge dealing with

a criminal than that of a father dealing with his erring child, such sufferings will be regarded as strictly penal rather than as disciplinary, will be regarded as expressions of God's condemnation of sin, and of His vindication of the moral interests of His universe. These two divergent interpretations of the suffering which sin brings upon the sinner may be inter-related. Much depends on which of them is regarded as primary.

2. The torments of a guilty conscience.

The uprising of conscience, the voice of God, against the sin of which the sinner knows himself to have been guilty is a divine reaction against sin of a weightier significance than the infliction upon him of physical suffering. It is on a deeper level, on the level, not of pleasure and pain, but of moral values. What most troubles the man whose conscience rises up in protest against him is not the physical suffering which sin may bring in its train, but the evil of his sin in itself. The sense of his disloyalty to the moral ideal, of his disloyalty to God, would haunt and torment him, no matter how he might escape from the consequences of his sin in physical suffering, no matter how great might be the pleasure accruing otherwise from his sin. It is the sin in itself which confronts and confounds him.

The torments of a guilty conscience are not in proportion to the badness of the sinner.

On the contrary, they are rather an index of his moral sensitiveness. The emergence of the sense of guilt betokens that his better self disowns his sin and is still on the side of his moral ideal. The stings of shame and remorse are a ground for hope of ultimate victory over his sin. Were he visited by no such stings, where would be the ground for this hope? The experience of this "divine reaction" against his sin may be the starting point for a new and better life. Especially if he is made aware of being backed up by a friend's belief in him. Were he haunted by the sense of being despised and forsaken by everyone, the issue might be despair of moral recovery. Different might be the issue, if there came to him the assurance that he was beset by a love that lived on through all his sin.

3. The worsening of the moral self.

Here again what is in the forefront is not sin followed by physical suffering, but sin as in itself an evil thing.

After his sin the sinner is not the same man as he was before it. The sin gets built up into his very self. The awful nemesis of sin is that it cleaves to the sinner.

> Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
> And what we have been makes us what we are.

The effect of sin in worsening the moral

personality of the sinner, in poisoning the well of life, in hardening the heart, in stifling the voice of conscience, has been a common theme with those who have brooded over the tragedy of human life. The words of Robert Burns may be recalled :

> I wave the quantum o' the sin ;
> The hazard of concealing ;
> But Och ! it hardens a' within
> And petrifies the feeling.*

Romola's account of the career of Tito may also be recalled : " There was a man to whom I was very near, so that I could see a great deal of his life, who made almost everyone fond of him, for he was young, and clever, and beautiful, and his manners to all were gentle and kind. I believe, when I first knew him he never thought of anything cruel or base. But because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing else so much as his own safety, he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds such as make men infamous." †

These three kinds of the unhappy consequences of sin are facts vouched for by what we know of human life. They belong to the moral order of the world in which we find ourselves. If we believe that God is at the

* *Epistle to a Young Friend*
† George Eliot, *Romola*, the epilogue.

heart of this moral order, it is legitimate for us to regard these unhappy consequences as reactions of God against sin, as expressions of His hostility to sin, as expressions of His wrath against sin.

Questions of course may be raised here: Why should the moral order of the world be such as it is? If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why should there be either suffering or sin in the world? Why should man have been endowed with the power of resisting the will of God, and so exposed to the risk of enduring the unhappy consequences which such resistance carries with it? Why should one consequence of sin be a still further worsening of the moral self? These are serious questions deserving serious consideration, but what we are concerned with at present is the moral order of the world as we find it actually to be.

We have noted that three kinds of unhappy consequences may be legitimately regarded as expressions of the wrath of God against sin. We now go on to inquire what Paul has to say about these consequences.

Paul is not preoccupied with the thought of the consequences of sin in the physical suffering here or hereafter which sin brings in its train. It is not in this connection he is wont to speak of the wrath of God.

As a Pharisee he had had painful experience of the torments of a guilty conscience. The

root of his trouble was not in disobedience to the precepts of the Jewish law, for he could claim to be blameless "as touching the righteousness which is in the law." It was in his evil self, which reduced his better self to impotence in his struggle to be true to the vision of a goodness of heart by which he was haunted and disturbed. On this deep level his cry: "O wretched man that I am!" was a cry from a guilty conscience, but he does not speak of this experience as an expression of the wrath of God.

It is in connection with the last of the three kinds of the unhappy consequences of sin, the worsening of the moral self, he speaks of the wrath of God. "The wrath of God," he says, in the Epistle to the Romans, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (*Rom.* 1.18). He indicates how this wrath of God is revealed in the ever increasing moral deterioration of the sinner. "Knowing God, they glorified him not as God . . . but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (*Rom.* 1.21). "They became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of . . . corruptible man. . . . Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness. . . . For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions" (*Rom.* 1.22-26). "As they refused to have

God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, &c." (*Rom.* 1.28–32). Moral deterioration as the consequence of sin is an expression of the wrath of God. This is part of the moral of God's universe.

This dread consequence of sin is not confined to the present life; it works on into the future. It is, indeed, chiefly in connection with its working on into the future that Paul speaks of the wrath of God. "Jesus, which delivereth from the wrath to come" (1 *Thess.* 1.10). "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (*Rom.* 2.4–5). "We shall be saved from wrath through him" (*Rom.* 5.9). The law of the moral order that sin has its inevitable consequence in moral deterioration has to do with the future as well as with the present. If the sinner persist in his sin, what can the final issue be but moral ruin (ἀπώλεια), eternal destruction (ὄλεθρος ἀίωνιος), death (θάνατος), corruption (φθορά)? Here there is nothing arbitrary. Moral ruin is the inevitable consequence of sin unrepented of. "God is

not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the spirit shall of the spirit reap eternal life" (*Gal.* 6.7–8).

Our consideration of what Paul means by the wrath of God seems to rule out any suggestion that he interprets it according to the analogy of the vindictive passion cherished by a wronged man against the wrongdoer. Such a suggestion is irreconcilable with his persistent emphasis upon the love of God for his sinful children. It was not so that he had learned about God at the feet of Jesus, who said to His disciples: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven."

We are now prepared to understand how Paul co-ordinates his emphasis on the love of God with what he says about the wrath of God.

The various unhappy consequences of sin which we have had under consideration belong to the moral order of God's world and may be spoken of as expressions of God's wrath against sin.

Paul may have little to say about physical suffering as the consequence of sin, but he has had painful experience of the tyranny of the evil self and of the torments of a guilty

conscience, and he is keenly alive to the fact that evil actions and evil thoughts live on in a worsening of the moral personality, whose ultimate issue is eternal moral ruin. If such is the evil plight of sinners, it makes its appeal to God's fatherly love. As Paul himself puts it: "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (*Rom.* 5.20). That was how the evil plight of His sinful fellows appealed to the love of Jesus. Just because they were lost, He must seek them and save them: the strength of His love left Him no choice. In the light of the love of Jesus, Paul interpreted the love of God. The deeper was the evil plight of sinners, to the greater heights must the love of God rise. As the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, He could do no other than work upon them with all the resources of His fatherly love, that He might draw them to Himself as dear children, to a new life of filial fellowship with Himself and of filial loyalty to His ideals. For Paul, what he meant by the wrath of God against sin was no barrier to the outflow of the love of God towards the sinner; it was but an additional appeal to the heart of God.

Here there is no risk of God's hostility to sin being kept in the background. If there is an expression of God's hostility to sin in its unhappy consequences for the sinner, there is a still higher expression of this hostility in what

is involved in the outflow of God's love for the sinner's salvation. The whole story of the love of Jesus for His sinful fellows was an expression of the divine hostility to sin. In fulfilling His vocation to lift His fellows into the new life of fellowship with their Father in heaven and of loving service to others, and to bind them together as citizens of the Kingdom of God, He took upon His loving heart heavy burdens. He suffered with and for His fellows in their sin and misery. He lived and suffered and endured the death of the Cross to deliver His fellows from their evil plight as sinners. Here was the crowning divine reaction to sin. Here was a more convincing condemnation of sin than the infliction upon the sinner of physical suffering could ever be, and a condemnation of sin with more power in the heart of it to win the sinner from his evil ways. An erring child may be helped to an understanding of the gravity of his offence by his father's infliction of punishment, but much more will he be helped to penitence by the assurance of his father's unabated love and by knowing how deeply he has wounded his father's heart. So God's suffering love expressed in the life and Cross of Jesus is not only the condemnation of sin but redeeming and renewing power at work upon the sinner.

CHAPTER VI

THE CROSS AND THE LAW

FOR a due understanding of Paul's interpretation of Christianity it is important to have an adequate view of the way in which he relates the Cross to the Law.

The relation between the two has been often conceived in some such way as this. God as moral Governor of the universe has made known the moral laws to which men must render obedience. He has also made known the penalties He has attached to disobedience. Part of these penalties has to be endured in the present, but the major part in the future life. God, if He is to be a righteous Judge and to safeguard the moral interests of His universe, cannot at the bidding of His mere good will remit the penalties which He has Himself attached to offences against His law. But inflexible justice is not the only attribute of God; another of His attributes is love. As a God of love He cannot leave His sinful children in their evil plight. He longs to draw them (or at least a certain number of them) back to Himself that He may renew them by

His spirit and so fit them for a life of eternal blessedness in heaven. But this outgoing of His love is blocked by the penalties due to the offences of His sinful children. Love solves the problem. At the prompting of His fatherly love God sends His only begotten Son into the world, that in the likeness of sinful flesh, He may pay the penalties which sinners must otherwise have themselves paid. When the claims of justice have been thus met, the way is opened up for the love of God to flow forth to sinful men and to achieve love's purpose. The only condition they have to fulfil is that they should take up an appropriate attitude towards what Christ by His sufferings and Cross has thus done on their behalf.

In this interpretation of the relation of the Cross to the law what is prominent is the way in which the penalties decreed by the law for disobedience to its precepts can be justly remitted. The conception of the law itself remains as it was. The ethical ideal as observance of the precepts of law is still retained, and God is still conceived as essentially, though not exclusively, Legislator and Judge. Law is the supreme category by which the relations of God to man are interpreted.

This statement of the connection between the Cross and the law will engage our attention at a later stage. The one point with which we are at present concerned is the bearing of

Paul's understanding of the significance of the Cross upon the conception of law as the supreme category for the interpretation of God's relations to man.

Two questions fall to be considered in the light of what Paul sees in the life and Cross of Jesus: (1) Is obedience to the statutory precepts of a code of law the highest ethical ideal? and (2) Is God first and foremost Legislator and Judge or first and foremost a loving Father? These two questions we take up in the order indicated.

1. Law and the ethical ideal.

Paul's teaching on this subject is rooted in his own spiritual experience. As a Pharisee he had been obsessed by the idea that goodness meant a scrupulous observance of the precepts of the Jewish law, and his quest for goodness along that line had issued in a deep despair. When God revealed His Son in him, he had an experience of an inrush of love which gave him victory over his evil self.

This experience revolutionized his conception of the ethical ideal. Henceforth he puts the emphasis, not on what a man *does*, but on what he *is* in mind and heart and will. So he draws a sharp contrast between the law (the external observance of precepts) and the spirit (a spiritual impulse uprising in the heart). "Ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter (the written law), but of the spirit: for

the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life . . . If the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory . . . how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory" (2 *Cor.* 3.6–8). "We have been discharged from the law . . . that we might serve in newness of the spirit, not in oldness of the letter" (*Rom.* 7.6).

The spirit is "the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the spirit by which Jesus the Lover of men was inspired, the spirit of love. Love is a creative impulse which transcends law, which "exceeds duty and outstrips requirement." Love takes a wider and more fruitful range than obedience to the precepts of any law. So Paul speaks of love as the *fulfilling* of the law, a fulfilling which attains what the law is aiming at and much more so. "Through love be servants to one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (*Gal.* 5.13–14). "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law" (*Rom.* 13.8-10).

Paul is, of course, aware that love needs guidance. There is, therefore, an extraordinary abundance of precepts in his epistles. In the words of a classical scholar which I have quoted elsewhere, "Turn to the close of one of his epistles. One on the heels of the other, his precepts come tumbling out, breaking impetuously into questions, reinforced by quotations, by adjurations, by appeals to his personal experience, by prayers, by tears." * But these precepts are not of the nature of statutory precepts which can be obeyed in the letter by the forthputting of will force. They are signposts, pointing out the path for the creative impulse of love to follow. In the Epistle to the Colossians Paul says: "Put on therefore . . . a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any," and then adds the final precept, as if to show to what all these other precepts are pointing, "and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (*Col.* 3.12-14). In a somewhat similar way he indicates in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians that his precepts are for the guidance of love. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave

* R. W. Livingstone, *The Greek Genius and its Meaning to Us*, p. 26.

itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked . . . covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 *Cor.* 13.4-7). By his multiplied precepts Paul reminds his readers that the love which he extols is no mere intense unregulated impulse, that it must be controlled by the spirit of Christ.

It was from Jesus Paul learned to draw a sharp contrast between the two ideals represented in his phraseology by "law" and "spirit"; that is, between obedience to the statutory precepts of law imposed from without and love flowing forth spontaneously from within. Jesus so magnified love as against law that the Pharisees and scribes made up their minds that He must be put to death. His Cross put the seal upon His magnifying of love against law. Henceforth there could not but be antagonism between the Cross of Christ and obedience to precepts of law as the ethical ideal.

This irreconcilable antagonism between the Cross and the law is again and again pressed home by Paul. In the epistle to the Galatians, which was written expressly to make it clear that Christian discipleship did not involve the observance of the Jewish law by Gentile converts, he says quite bluntly: "If righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought" (*Gal.* 2.21). That is, if observance

of the law was an indispensable feature of the good life of a disciple of Christ, then Christ had lived and died in vain. It was a higher ideal of the good life which was the burden of His teaching; it was a higher ideal which roused the hostility of the Pharisees against Him; it was for a higher ideal He was put to death on the Cross.

In a later chapter of the epistle to the Galatians we have a further pronouncement upon the incompatibility of the Cross and the law. "Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Gal.* 6.19). That this glorying in the Cross is set over against glorying in the law is made clear by the context in which these great words occur. In these concluding verses of the epistle Paul is summing up the whole line of argument he has been bringing to bear against the imposition of the observance of the Jewish law upon the Gentile converts of Galatia. The Judaizing Christians, who had come to counteract what they regarded as the mischievously lax teaching of Paul, had been trying to persuade the Galatian Christians to commit themselves to the observance of the Jewish law. If they so committed themselves, they would escape the hostility of Jews who were enraged by such a preaching of the Cross as so magnified love as inevitably to disparage the Jewish law. "As many as desire to make a fair show in the

flesh (by the observance of the precepts of the Jewish law), they compel you to be circumcised ; only that they may not be persecuted for the Cross of Christ . . . They desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh (in your observance of the Jewish law)." Then Paul breaks in with his confession of what it is he himself is compelled to glory in : " Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." That confession is followed by an indication of his reason for glorying in the Cross of Christ : " For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation "—a new creation which includes amongst other things a new ideal of the truly good life. What this new ideal is, has been already suggested in the fifth chapter of the epistle : " For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ; but faith working through love."

In Paul's understanding of the ethical ideal, then, the Cross is set over against the law. The highest ethical life is more than obedience to precepts of law, it springs from the inner life of the heart ; it is the fruit of the spirit of Christ ; it is the outcome of love like that of Jesus the Lover of men in His life and sufferings and death. As Paul puts it decisively and pithily : " Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness (that is, as the way to true goodness) to everyone that believeth " (*Rom.* 10.4).

Law is dethroned, and its place is taken by the Cross and the love for which the Cross stands.

2. Law and the character of God.

God and the ethical ideal are so intertwined that a change in the interpretation of the ethical ideal must be reflected in a change in the interpretation of the character of God. If the ethical ideal is regarded, not as obedience to the precepts of law, but as the spirit of Christ or the love of Christ, then God will be regarded less as Legislator and Judge and more as a loving Father.

When God revealed His Son in him, Paul had an experience of a sudden shedding abroad in his heart of the love of God. Such an experience meant a revolution in his conception of the character of God. He had hitherto thought of God as willing indeed to receive him into His favour, but only on the condition that by obedience to the precepts of the law he first made himself worthy of being so received. Now he had an experience of the love of God suddenly enfolding him, unworthy sinner as he was. God had not waited till he proved himself worthy of His love. He had shed abroad in his heart His unmerited love. He had "justified the ungodly."

This new revelation of the character of God came to Paul through Christ. It was thus that Jesus the Lover of men had borne Himself

towards sinners. His love went out to them, not because they were worthy of it, but because they had need of it. And Jesus was sure that in thus bearing Himself towards sinful men and women he was revealing the heart and will of His Father in heaven. For Jesus, God was ever the loving Father of His sinful children, not keeping aloof from them till they were worthy of being received into His favour, but ever pressing in upon them with His love to draw them home to Himself.

It is in Jesus, in the love which was at the heart of His life and sufferings and Cross, Paul sees the character of God mirrored. So God is for him the God and Father of his Lord Jesus Christ. To set forth what he has learned through Jesus about the unmerited love of God, he makes copious use of the phrase, " the grace of God." By his use of the word " grace " he throws into relief the contrast between the love of God as disclosed in his Christian experience and his former conception of the love of God as something which had to be merited by obedience to the precepts of the law, by " works " of the law. So we find him insisting that the character of God is to be interpreted, not by the category of law, but by the higher category of fatherly " prevenient " love. " We are not under the law," he says to the Christians in Rome, " but under grace " (*Rom.* 6.15). Elsewhere he indicates that loyalty to Christ's

revelation of the character of God is incompatible with the interpretation of God in terms of law. "Ye are severed (brought to nought) from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (*Gal.* 5.4).

Some further remarks may be added on Paul's attitude to the law.

His various references to the law in his epistles have given rise to not a little perplexity. He uses the word "law" in many different senses. For example, when he speaks of "the *law* of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," or of seeing "a different *law* in my members, warring against the *law* of my mind," he is using the word in what seems to us an abnormal sense. But apart from such abnormal uses of the word there are two distinct and divergent meanings which he attaches to the word.

There are several passages in his epistles in which the law is virtually equivalent to the ethical ideal. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (*Rom.* 7.12). "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (*Rom.* 7.22). "That the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (*Rom.* 8.4). "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (*Rom.* 13.10). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (*Gal.* 6.2). "Do we then make the

law of none effect through faith ? God forbid : Nay, we establish the law " (*Rom.* 3.31). In this sense of the word Paul has no thought of setting the Cross of Christ over against the law.

It is in a restricted sense of the word he contrasts the law with the Cross. Here he is bent on emphasizing these two convictions of his : (i.) that the observance of precepts of law as against the spirit of Christ Jesus, as against love, is not the highest ethical ideal ; and (ii.) that the outgoing of the love of God upon the hearts of sinful men is not conditioned by their meritorious observance of the precepts of the law. In this sense of the word he sets the Cross of Christ over against the law.

In his disparagement of the law from this point of view Paul, it must be confessed, seems sometime to press the note unduly. Especially is this the case with some of his references to the significance of the law for the people of Israel. For example, he says that " that the law came in . . . that the trespass might abound " (*Rom.* 3.20) ; " that the law was added because of transgressions (that is, to produce transgressions) " (*Gal.* 3.19) ; that it was not given directly by God but " ordained through angels by the hands of a mediator " (*Gal.* 3.19).

Statements such as these may not be happy specimens of valid argument. They are at least convincing evidence that Paul had a grudge against the " law." His impatience

with the " law " was indeed extraordinary, and the real reason for this impatience is not far to seek. It was the outcome of his exceptional zeal for moral interests. If he disparages the mere observance of rules, whether ceremonial or moral, as a worthy ideal for man's life, it is in the interests of the higher ideal of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, of love like that of Jesus the Lover of men. If he disparages the notion that the outgoing of the love of God to sinners must be merited by good " works," it is that he may vindicate the character of God as the God of grace, as the righteous God whose righteousness is aglow with the irrepressible passion of fatherly love.

Some of the arguments Paul uses in buttressing his convictions may seem far-fetched and unconvincing, but in his conception of the relations of the life and Cross of Jesus to the law he has got to the heart of Christianity. He has here got to the mind of Jesus Himself. It is Jesus who has inspired him to be the uncompromising opponent of legalism in morality and in religion ; to be the defender of the creative impulse of love as the true ethical ideal, and to magnify the grace of God as it has been mirrored in the life and teaching and Cross of the Lover of men.

CHAPTER VII

RECONCILIATION WITH GOD THROUGH THE CROSS

THROUGH his own unique spiritual experience Jesus had a unique sense of the supreme worth of filial fellowship with God as His loving Father and of love as the bond of union between His Father's children. As the Lover of men, of His brothers in the one great family of God, it was, as we have noted in an earlier chapter, the absorbing passion of His life to bring them to be sharers of His own experience of fellowship with God and of love to one another. He found His fellows estranged from His Father in heaven and gripped in the power of evil desires and ambitions which were poisoning their relations to one another, and He was ever striving, by the words He spoke to them and by what He did, to reconcile them to God and to one another. "Wherever we meet Jesus reconciling virtue goes out of Him."*

His reconciling virtue was His love. The love that was flowing forth to sinful men and women from His personality and words and deeds was power to set up in their hearts a

* Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 16.

ferment of new thoughts, new aspirations, new resolutions. It increased, indeed, the sense of their unworthiness, but it awakened at the same time a new hope. It availed "to raise the sense of guilt and to attract the confidence of the guilty."

Paul had experience of the divine love as reconciling power. Unrecognized by himself, this divine love had been at work with him while he was still a Pharisee. It had been at work in the visions of a higher kind of goodness than the observance of legal precepts by which he was haunted and disturbed, in his despair of deliverance from the crushing bondage of his evil self, in his sense of lying under the righteous condemnation of God as his Judge. In these and similar experiences the reconciling love of God was besetting him, ever seeking him that he might seek and find the reconciling God. The hour came when the reconciling love of God achieved its purpose with him. The love of God was suddenly and amazingly shed abroad in his heart, and to the overture of God's love he responded with the whole strength of his personality. In that hour he was at one with God. He knew himself to be an estranged child reconciled to his Father.

This reconciliation with God meant for Paul a transformation in the inmost sanctuary of his soul. He felt himself ushered into "a new creation," into a new world. "Old things

were passed away; behold they had become new" (2 *Cor.* 5.17). He found himself taken into the heart of a God of reconciling love. The inrush of a tide of love into his heart ended the tyranny of his evil self. An answer had been given to his despairing cry: "Who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" (*Rom.* 7.24). Reconciled to God, he could never cease to exult in his new outlook upon life and the world. Here was the secret of his radiant joy, of his unconquerable hope, of his indomitable courage.*

To Paul this reconciliation with God came through Christ. "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now now received the *reconciliation*" (*Rom.* 5.11).†

* Cf. what is said by a modern philosopher: "In the unity of love and will with the supreme good you are not only 'saved,' but you are 'free' and 'strong.' Action, initiative, even courage, flow from you like a spring from its source. The source may be fed from a deep reservoir in the hills, but none the less its flow is its own." B. Bosanquet, *What Religion Is*, p. 20.

† This is the rendering of the R.V. In the A.V. the rendering is different: "by whom we have now received the *atonement.*" In the beginning of the seventeenth century, at the time when the A.V. was being prepared, the word "atonement" was still commonly used in the sense of reconciliation, at-one-ment. It is often found in this sense in Shakespeare. For example, in *Richard III*, 1.iii.36,

> He desires to make atonement
> Betwixt the Duke of Gloucester and your brothers.

It is in accordance with this well-established use of the word we read in the A.V. the rendering we have quoted: "by whom we have now received the atonement." It was only in later times the word came to have a different meaning. In theology it was used to denote "that which was adapted to prevent punishment, or that which came in the room of punishment." See the New English Dictionary, *sub voce*. This was not an idea which Paul had in his mind when he spoke about reconciliation in *Rom.* 5.11, or indeed anywhere else.

Very emphatically does Paul connect reconciliation with the sufferings and death of Jesus. "If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (*Rom.* 5.10). "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross . . . You being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (*Col.* 1.19-22).

Love was the power by which Jesus drew sinful men and women to be at home with their Father in heaven. In the love of Jesus for God's estranged children, and especially in the supreme manifestation of that love in His sufferings and Cross, Paul found the very love of God Himself. It was the love of God in Christ which had been shed abroad in his heart on the way to Damascus. So what is ever uppermost in all his thoughts about man's reconciliation with God is the power of the reconciling love of God in Christ. Here man is not left to himself and to his own sore struggling. God is already on the field on his behalf. His reconciling love is at work upon him, insistently, unweariedly seeking entrance into his heart, eagerly waiting for the opening of the door.

If God may be rightly spoken of as *numen tremendum*,* reconciliation with God through Christ may be regarded as a "tremendous" experience. Here God and the individual are face to face with each other in the deepest places of the soul; God acting and man reacting; God acting in the overture of His Christlike love and man reacting in his response to God's love and to God's ideals for his life. It is therefore inevitable that reconciliation with God should have a direct and most fruitful bearing upon the whole wide sphere of spiritual experience.

In illustration we select five aspects of spiritual experience for consideration.

1. Repentance.

Paul does not often speak explicitly of repentance. That does not mean that what the word denotes has no important place in his thoughts. On the contrary, he takes for granted that without repentance there can be no reconciliation with God. Response to the reconciling love of God in Christ involves a decision to be loyal to Christ's ideals for man's life, and such a decision carries with it a resolution to have done with the old evil ways which have issued in estrangement from God. Repentance is thus put in a large setting. It is more than a mere renunciation of certain evil ways. It is a radical "change of mind," as

* A phrase used by Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy*.

the Greek word μετάνοια suggests; a change of mind about God, about the meaning of life, about the things most worth striving for. Especially must the intimate connection of repentance with a sense of the reconciling love of God be kept steadily in view. Repentance is not a "work" which man has to do to make it possible for God to let His love go out to him. On the contrary, it is the "prevenient" love of God which evokes repentance, which generates the impulse to hate sin and forsake it. It was through his experience of the forgiving love of Jesus that Zacchæus was stirred to say: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold" (*Luke* 19.8). It was through the memory of his experience of his father's love the son in the parable was stirred to say: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight" (*Luke* 15.18). And it was in the light of the love with which his father welcomed him to the old home the son had his deepest insight into the evil of his wayward ways and his deepest hatred of these ways. Love was *the* power for repentance.

Paul recognizes that the new life which springs from reconciliation with God through Christ and His Cross is continually exposed to the assaults of evil impulses which war against it. "The

flesh (the lower self) lusteth against the spirit (the higher self) and the spirit against the flesh ; for these are contrary the one to the other ; that ye may not do the things that ye would " (*Gal.* 5.17). So we find Paul again and again calling upon the members of the Christian communities to beat down these evil impulses, to renounce everything which would interfere with loyalty to their new ideals of what they should be as disciples of Christ. He may not use the word " repentance," but it is a call to repentance we hear in sayings like these : " They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof " (*Gal.* 5.24). " Put ye also away all these : anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth : lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man " (*Col.* 3.8–9). " Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus " (*Rom.* 6.11). Make dead the impulses of the evil self, " mortify your members which are upon the earth . . . uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness " (*Col.* 3.5). In the Christian life there is ever fresh need for repentance, and every fresh experience of the reconciling love of God is a renewed call to repentance.

2. Forgiveness.

Forgiveness, like repentance, is an essential

factor in the experience of reconciliation with God, and, like repentance, it has its place in a large setting. The experience of being forgiven by God, of being taken into the heart of God, is no isolated blessing. It is part of a wider experience, experience of the reconciling love of God at work in the heart and of whole-hearted response to this love, experience of an awakened sense of the evil of old ways and of a decision to be loyal to the ideals for man's life set forth by God in the life and Cross of Jesus. With this conception of forgiveness as an indispensable factor in the experience of reconciliation with God we need be at no loss to understand why Paul should so seldom speak explicitly of forgiveness. He simply could not think of a reconciliation with God apart from the sinner's sense of being forgiven by God, of being received into God's favour.

One common saying about forgiveness would have given Paul pause : " God forgives, when man repents." If that means that in the absence of repentance a sinful man could have no experience of the forgiving love of God, Paul would have assented. But if it means that God's forgiving love is repressed till the sinful man repents, it would have expressed Paul's thought while he was still a Pharisee, but it would have been hopelessly out of harmony with his conception of the God of grace, the outgoing of whose love to the sinner

was the power that was leading him to repentance. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (*Rom.* 2.4).

3. Sonship with God.

To be reconciled to God is to have an experience of sonship with God, an experience of the fellowship of a reconciled son with a loving Father, an experience of being at home with God. Such an experience of sonship stirred Paul into exultant thanksgiving. "God sent forth His Son that we might receive the adoption of sons . . . God sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (*Gal.* 4.4-7). "Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father . . . We are children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God" (*Rom.* 8.15-17). Such an experience of sonship means a changed atmosphere in the inner world of the soul. Estrangement from God has given place to filial intimacy, unrest under the accusation of a guilty conscience has given place to peace with God, fear has given place to trust and hope and joy.

Along with that change in the atmosphere of the inner world there is a change of outlook

upon the outer world. Whoever is reconciled to the God of love finds himself in a very real sense at home in the world, for he finds himself in his Father's world, in a world which has his Father's love at the heart of it. That is what Paul means when he says: "If a son, then an heir through God; if children, then heirs, heirs of God." For those who live as children reconciled to their Father in heaven the whole world is their heritage. The resources of their Father's world are at their command. There is nothing in all its happenings which they cannot turn to account for the furtherance of their own highest interests. "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good" (*Rom.* 8.22). The son is heir of all things, lord of all things. "All things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours" (1 *Cor.* 3.21–22). With this conviction, rooted in his experience of reconciliation with a God of love, that nothing can happen to him which is not subservient to God's purpose of love for him, Paul not merely accepts the hard things in his lot in a submissive spirit, but he dares to welcome them with the stern joy of one who knows how to "turn his necessity to glorious gain."

Sonship with God means peace and joy and hope, but it means more. It means great demands. The son who is reconciled to his

Father is committed to be loyal to his Father's ideals for his own life and to the purposes his Father is working out with the whole family of mankind. He is committed to be a fellow worker with God in realizing the vision of the new humanity of which Christ is the inaugurator and inspirer. To be a true son of God is to be a hero, a hero after the fashion of Jesus the Lover of men.

4. Union with Christ.

Reconciliation with God has its issue in a life of filial fellowship with God, of companionship with God, of co-operation with God. The reconciled son lives and moves and has his being in God his Father.* Reconciliation with God came to Paul through Christ. The God with whom he was reconciled was the God whose love was mirrored in the life and Cross of Jesus. So his life as a Christian was lived in fellowship with God in Christ. So inseparable in his thought was God from Christ that he can speak of the Christian life not merely as fellowship with God but as fellowship with Christ. "Ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 *Cor.* 1.9). One of his constantly recurring phrases, "in Christ," is the expression of the very core of his Christian

* Cf. the epitaph on Jacob Boehme, quoted in Evelyn Underhill's *Mystics of the Church*, p. 74.

In water lives the fish, the plant in earth abides,
The bird in air, the sun in firmament,
In burning fire the salamander hides,
God's heart is Jacob Boehme's element.

experience. Union with Christ in vision and love and will was at the heart of all his thought and ambition and activity. His life might be described as "the practice of the presence of God in Christ."

This aspect of Paul's Christian experience is sometimes spoken of as "mystical union." The phrase is not happily chosen. It might suggest that for Paul union with God was essentially union with God as the Infinite or Absolute, and it might also suggest that withdrawal from interest in the world in which he found himself was a prominent feature of his religious life. But there was no such "mystical" aloofness in his attitude to the world and its interests. Union with God in Christ inhibited such an attitude. Jesus had a keen appreciation of the interestingness and wonder and beauty of His Father's world, and he was mastered by a vision of the Kingdom of God for the realization of which He summoned His followers to be His fellow-workers. Paul was loyal to the mind of his Master. He believed that at the heart of the world was the love of God in Christ, and he had a great vision of a new humanity of which Christ was the Head, and bent the whole strength of his mind and heart and will to realize it. Paul was no quietist; he was an heroic fighter.

5. A new ethical life.

Reconciliation with God through Christ

cannot be effected in the absence on man's part of a resolution to strive to be loyal to God's ideals for his life set forth in the life and Cross of Jesus. That can be no true reconciliation with God which does not lead on to a Christ-like life. For the Christlike life which is the issue of reconciliation with God through Christ Paul has a phrase of his own to describe it—" the righteousness which is of faith " or " the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus." He chooses this particular phraseology to set the new ethical life which issues from reconciliation with God in Christ over against a righteousness which is no more than the observance of precepts of law. " The Gentiles (the believing Gentiles) . . . attained to righteousness—even the righteousness which is of faith . . . (the unbelieving Jews) being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth " (*Rom.* 9.30 : 10.3–4). " I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith " (*Phil.* 3.8–9).

The faith which has its issue in a righteous-

ness which means a Christlike life is something far other than a mere assent to doctrines about Christ. It is a whole-hearted response to the overture of the God of grace in His appeal to His estranged children to return to their loving Father and to identify themselves with their Father's ideals for their life, as these ideals were lived out by Jesus. Thus the faith from which the new ethical life springs is a very great thing. It is a loyal acceptance of Christ's ideals which is interwined with an experience of the reconciling love of God in Christ. It was therefore impossible for Paul to do other than magnify the worth of faith for the ethical life. For him there was the closest possible connection between religion and morality.

In reconciliation with God through Christ Paul found what he reckoned the things most worth striving for. He had longed for the incoming into his life of some power that would give him the victory over the evil self and its impulses, and he longed to be right with God, to be at peace with God, to have close and glad intimacy with God. God in Christ had met these two longings. There came to him an inrush of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and such a shedding abroad in his heart of the love of God as made him at home with God.

Conscious of having found through Christ

the secret of true life, Paul was fired with the desire to bring his fellows to be sharers in his own experience. In carrying out what was now his life purpose, what he aimed at was what Jesus had aimed at in His ministry to His fellows. He was not content to tell his fellows about the teaching and example of Jesus, and plead with them to accept Jesus as their Teacher and Exemplar. He pressed them in upon the deep places of heart and conscience. It was with the renewal of their inner life he was concerned. He appealed to them to come to terms with the overtures of the God of grace, to let themselves be captured by love as the master passion in their life. He appealed to them to be reconciled to God and to God's ideals of what they should be. So he described his apostolic work as a ministry of reconciliation. "All things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ; and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 *Cor.* 5.18–19).

As a minister of reconciliation Paul regarded himself as the representative, the ambassador of Christ. "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (2 *Cor.* 5.20).

That is, Paul believed that he was continuing the work of the ministry of Jesus to His fellows; that he was loyal to the mind of Jesus in the emphasis he put on the fatherly love of God and on love as the secret of a truly good life. It would be strange then, were it true, that Paul had little interest in, or even little knowledge of, the facts of the life of the Jesus of history. Such a conclusion does not follow from the comparative paucity of his references to the words and deeds of Jesus. The legitimate conclusion is rather this, that he was appealing for far more than the acceptance of the teaching and example of Jesus; that he was appealing for the renewal of the inner life, for that reconciliation to God and to God's ideals which was at the heart of all that Jesus taught and did in His ministry to His fellows. And how but through knowledge of the facts of the life of Jesus the Lover of men could Paul have come to lay the emphasis he did certainly lay upon the grace of God and upon love as the fulfilling of the law? It was not from the Judaism in which he had been reared that he learned to lay the emphasis upon these two things; nor from any knowledge he may have had of the teaching of Stoic philosophers and Stoic missionaries; nor from any familiarity he may have had with the ritual and phraseology of popular mystery religions in the Gentile world. It was the Jesus of history

who gave Paul his message as a minister of reconciliation.

Very specially was it by the Jesus of history Paul was equipped to be a minister of reconciliation for the Gentiles. As a Jew of the Dispersion he had been brought in his early years into contact with the Gentile world. He knew the dark side of life in Gentile cities, but he knew also that there was a brighter side. He had met Gentiles who showed "the work of the law written in their hearts," and whose worthy lives might have put to shame some of their Jewish neighbours (*Rom.* 2.15-27). He had met Gentiles, too, who had been attracted by the ethical monotheism and the high standard of domestic and social life with which the Jewish synagogue was identified. Like many of his fellow countrymen he may have had his dreams of the Jewish faith capturing the allegiance of the Gentile world, but, as we have already indicated, he realized how great was the obstacle for earnest-minded Gentiles created by the demand of the synagogue for the observance by proselytes of the whole system of the Jewish law. The problem of the Gentile world may well have lain heavily upon Paul's heart, while he was still a Pharisee. A surprising light was thrown upon the problem when it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in him. Through Christ he learned that the grace of God was not conditioned by

observance of the Jewish law, and that observance of the Jewish law was not essential for a good and God-pleasing life. That discovery opened up the way for a new and more hopeful approach to the Gentiles. As a minister of reconciliation with God through Christ, Paul was to appeal to the Gentiles to be reconciled, not to a God tied to the Jewish law, but to the God of grace who was the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and to accept as their ethical ideal, not the observance of the Jewish law, but the ideal enshrined in the sufferings and Cross of Jesus. Reconciliation to God through Christ was to break down the barrier which separated Jews from Gentiles. Henceforth they were to meet on common ground, on the ground of the things which Jesus regarded as of supreme worth, the things for which He lived and suffered and died. What had kept them apart, "the bond written in ordinances" (that is, the Jewish law), Jesus had "taken out of the way, nailing it to the Cross" (*Col.* 2.14). Through Christ Jews and Gentiles reconciled alike to God were to be reconciled to one another.

NOTE
ON
Reconciliation and Justification

In the theology of the Western Church, and especially since the sixteenth century, the idea of justification has

had a more prominent place than that of reconciliation. But in recent times there have been various indications of a change. Ritschl combined the two words in the title of his great book, "The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation." In the title of Dr. Denney's posthumous and in some respects greatest book the word "justification" is omitted and "reconciliation" stands alone: "The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation." We have here a significant change of emphasis, which suggests that what Paul has to say about justification may be best understood in the light of what he says about reconciliation.

In what he says about reconciliation with God through Christ in His Cross we have found two prominent features. In the first place, he puts in the forefront the "prevenient" reconciling love of God. God takes the initiative. The outgoing of His love to sinners is not conditioned by their worthiness to receive it; it is conditioned only by their need of it. This was the characteristic feature of the love of Jesus for sinful men and women which roused the anger of the Pharisees and the scribes, who "murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (*Luke*, 15.2). And it was this Christlike love of God of which Paul, sinful undeserving man as he was, had had experience when the love of God was shed abroad in his heart. In the second place Paul, puts stress upon man's response to the overture of God's reconciling love. On this response on man's part depends whether there will accrue to him the manifold blessings the reconciling love of God aims at bestowing upon him. Without an adequate response he cannot have experience of being taken into the heart of God, and he cannot have the well-spring of a new ethical life. Man must respond by faith to the grace of God.

These two prominent features of Paul's conception of reconciliation we may take as our clue for the understanding of what he means by justification.

In preaching Christ to the Gentiles Paul seems to have been accustomed to confine himself for the most part to the idea of reconciliation. If he does occasionally make use of the idea of justification, the reason is not to be

sought in a misgiving that his message would otherwise be imperfect. He makes use of it in only two of his epistles (*Galatians* and *Romans*),* and when he makes use of it the persons he has in view are Jews or Judaizing Christians. That suggests that he is making use of phraseology familiar to the Jews for the expression of his own higher conceptions. The Jewish phraseology was deeply dyed with legalism. For Paul to try to express his own decisively anti-legal thoughts in such Jewish phraseology was to undertake the task of pouring new wine into old wine-skins. The peril of embarking on such a task has been disclosed by the subsequent widespread misinterpretation of Paul's teaching about justification.

What was the Jewish conception of justification over against which Paul sets his own higher conception, as developed in what he has to say about reconciliation with God through Christ? In the Judaism of Paul's time there may well have been different ways of interpreting justification, for, if there was strictness as to what precepts of the law were to be obeyed, great freedom was allowed in the sphere of theological thinking. But there was one way of interpreting it which seems to have been widely current. It was believed that God in His mercy would at no distant date intervene in some supernatural fashion to bring the existing world-order ("the present age") to an end and inaugurate a new world-order ("the age to come"). This supernatural, catastrophic intervention of God would be primarily for the sake of His own chosen people, grievously down-trodden and distressed, but would include in its scope Gentiles as well as Jews. It was in some respects analogous to the Last Judgment as conceived outside Jewish circles. Admission into the Kingdom of God which was to be inaugurated at the end of the existing world-order would depend upon the obedience of the individual to the Jewish law. Perfect obedience was not

* The phraseology of justification occurs only once elsewhere, and in a connection which is noteworthy. "But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God." (1 *Cor.* 6.11. Note that sanctification here precedes justification.)

to be expected ; God in His mercy would accept something less. But a certain measure of obedience was indispensable.* Whoever would be found by God to have rendered the necessary measure of obedience would be accepted as fit to be admitted into the Kingdom of God and to share in its manifold blessings. That is, God's love would go out to those who had proved themselves worthy of receiving it ; God would justify the *godly*.

As a Christian Paul held fast to his Jewish belief in " a day of the Lord," when each individual would " receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad " (2 *Cor.* 5.10), and as a Christian he continued to be influenced by the current Jewish ideas about the sudden inauguration of a new world-order. But even as a Pharisee his interest was concentrated upon the present life. His supreme concern was not how to escape from the penalties of sin which awaited him in a future life, or how to make sure of the enjoyment of eternal happiness. His supreme concern was how, here and now, to be a good man and to be at peace with God. He sought indeed to be justified by God, to gain the assurance of being received into God's favour, of filial fellowship with God, of victory over his evil self, but the justification for which he passionately longed was a justification of which he could have a present experience. That pointed towards a transformation of the Jewish idea of justification. As a Christian Paul interpreted justification as something of which he had gained a present experience. " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ " (*Rom.* 5.1).

Paul was sure that his experience of justification had its origin in the reconciling love of God which had been shed abroad in his heart. He had not earned the outgoing of God's love by any works of his own ; it was all of grace. And through his response to the grace of God and to what

* " The Pharisaic position will never be understood by those who fail to realize that it tried to hold the balance between man's duty to strive to earn pardon and his inability to attain it without God's gracious gift of it." Israel Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, p. 147.

the grace of God aimed at doing for him, that is, through his faith, there had come to him what he had been eagerly in quest of—the sense of being at home with God and an inrush of love which gave him the victory over his evil self. God did not wait to justify him, did not wait to let His love go out to him, and to bestow upon him the blessings of a new life, till he had proved himself by his godliness to be worthy of such justification. God's love laid its power upon him and justified him while he was still ungodly.

Paul, therefore, could not but oust "law" from his interpretation of justification. The outgoing of God's reconciling love to him was not conditioned by his observance of the law, nor was observance of the law the characteristic note of the new life upon which he had entered. This ousting of "law" is thrown into relief by the way in which he sets grace over against law, and faith over against law.

We have the opposition of grace to law in such sayings as these: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (*Rom.* 6.19). "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law: ye are fallen away from grace" (*Gal.* 5.4). "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified . . . justified freely by his grace" (*Rom.* 3.20-24).

In justification the faith of man has its place as well as the grace of God. If the grace of God is to achieve its purpose with man, it must meet with man's response, with the outgoing of his heart and will to the divine love which is pressing in upon him and with his resolution to live as a loyal son of his loving Father. So Paul speaks of justification by faith as well as of justification by grace. "God is the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (*Rom.* 3.26). "We believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ" (*Gal.* 2.16). This faith is contrasted with works of the law. What God in His grace is aiming at for man is not obedience to legal precepts, but a life inspired by love like that of Christ, life in the spirit of Christ. "A man is justified by faith, apart from the works of the law" (*Rom.* 3.28). The righteousness

which is the goal of the dealings of God with man, what Paul speaks of as the righteousness of God, is the righteousness which is of faith. So we have his sharp contrast between "law-righteousness" and "faith-righteousness." "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law, but which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (*Phil.* 3.8–9).

Our interpretation of what Paul means by justification may help to throw light upon the difficulty to which his phrase "justifying the ungodly" has given rise. Most New Testament scholars are agreed that the Greek words must mean "declaring to be righteous those who in fact are not righteous." One suggested solution of the difficulty is the theory that to those whom God justifies He imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ. That is, God declares them to be righteous, not as they are in themselves, for they are unrighteous, but as they are when clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But Paul speaks nowhere of the imputed righteousness of Christ. He does speak of righteousness being imputed, but in a quite different connection. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him (A.V. was counted unto him) for righteousness" (*Rom.* 4.3). "It was reckoned unto him (A.V. was imputed to him) for righteousness" (*Rom.* 4.22). "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him (A.V. was accounted to him) for righteousness" (*Gal.* 3.6). This reference to the faith of Abraham is introduced by Paul in defence of his contention that the true kind of righteousness is not the righteousness which is of the law, but "that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Some modern expounders of Paulinism, who have themselves no sympathy with the theory of an imputed righteousness of Christ, have thrown out the suggestion that Paul, when he spoke of God justifying the ungodly, declaring those to be righteous who

were in fact not righteous, was resorting to some sort of legal fiction. Legal fiction! Was Paul, who was hotly impatient with legal realities in religion and morality, likely to resort in any circumstances or for any purpose to a legal fiction?

For a worthier solution of the difficulty let us go back to the Jewish idea which Paul had in view; this, namely, that whoever in the day of judgment would be found to have rendered the necessary measure of obedience to the Jewish law would be accepted as fit to be admitted into the Kingdom of God and to share its manifold blessings. Paul countered that idea by insisting that man's fitness for receiving the outgoing of God's love and the bestowal of the blessings God's love designed for him was not conditioned by his having earned such love, but solely by his need of it. So by a somewhat surprising, and to us a somewhat perplexing, adaptation of the Jewish idea he spoke of man's need of the outgoing of God's love as if it were the equivalent of the declaration by God that man by his obedience to the law had merited justification. Here the new wine has fairly burst the old wine-skins.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CROSS AND SALVATION

HOW Paul interprets salvation is indicated in what he tells us in the epistle to the Romans of his initial experiences as a Christian. The sore struggle between his better self and his evil self had issued in the despairing cry: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" The Deliverer appeared. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. *For* the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (*Rom.* 7.24 : 8.2). Deliverance, salvation, meant for him victory over his evil self and, as an integral factor in one double-sided experience, peace with God.

His Saviour was Christ, or God in Christ, and very emphatically God in Christ crucified. "I am not ashamed, of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (*Rom.* 1.16). "The word of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are

being saved it is the power of God" (1 *Cor.* 1.18). "We preach Christ crucified . . . Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 *Cor.* 1.23-29).

What is here put in the forefront is the power of God in Christ. The power of God unto salvation is the power of redeeming love. How this redeeming love works and what it achieves, is set forth in the story of the life of Jesus amongst His sinful fellows. His sympathy with them as lost children of His Father in heaven drew Him to their side. In His presence they were touched in heart and in conscience; a new shame for their evil ways disturbed them; new visions of what they might be were kindled; new aspirations and new hopes were stirred. A decisive response to the appeal of the forgiving love of Jesus had its issue in a changed life, in a life dominated by a settled purpose to become like Jesus in His filial loyalty to the loving Father in heaven and in loving service to His fellows. So did the power of the redeeming love of Jesus work itself into the hearts and lives of sinful men and women in the days of His flesh.

It was after this fashion Paul had his own experience of the redeeming love of God in Christ. Christ in His love "apprehended" him, laid His power upon him. This was the power, the power of love, which wrought a transformation in his inner life; which made another

man of him, a new man in mind and heart and will; which ushered him into a new world in which the old things had passed away, and, behold, they had become new.

This transformation was what God was aiming at in bringing the power of His redeeming love to bear upon him. This transformation was the eternal purpose of God's redeeming love: "Whom he foreknew, he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (*Rom.* 8.29). The "power of God unto salvation" was power to transform men into the likeness of Christ.

In this work of transformation into the likeness of Christ the interest of God is one with the true interest of man. Here God is the ally of man's better self. God is at work to draw forth the best that is in him, to intensify, purify, and strengthen it. God's power unto salvation is power to lay hold of the wealth of resources in man's personality, and to make the most that can be made out of the stuff. God is the Divine Friend of man, and all we have experienced or have heard of what friend may be to friend in drawing out the best in him, we can press into our service for an understanding of what God in Christ may be to us as "power unto salvation." Tennyson, speaking of Arthur Hallam, the influence of whose personality he never ceased to recognize as a prime

factor in quickening and enriching his own life, says :

> I felt and feel tho' left alone
> His being working in mine own.*

Of the life Paul lived with God in Christ as his Divine Friend he could have said that he "felt His being working in his own." This is what in effect he does say : "I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me : and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (*Gal.* 2.20). It was through his friendship with Christ he had his chance of developing his own individuality, of growing into his noblest selfhood. The more he yielded himself to be moulded by the greater personality of Christ, the richer did he become in his own personality. The more he was "Christ's man," the more was he the true Paul. The more he could say, "Christ liveth in me," the more truly could he say "I live." "I, yet not I," in these words he discloses the secret of his Christian life and character.

Thus far we have had chiefly in view the part which is played in salvation by the power of the redeeming love of God in Christ. But there is something else to be taken into account. Salvation involves man's co-operation with

* *In Memoriam*, LXXXV.

God. If salvation is God's gift, it is man's task. Man must fall in with God's purpose to conform him to the likeness of Christ. That demands the forthputting of what will-force is at his command. He is entangled in a coil of evil thoughts and ambitions and impulses which are holding him back in his struggle to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. God has not left him alone in the struggle, but man must himself *will* to fall in with God's purpose. God cannot relieve him of that responsibility, for His loving purpose with him would fail if it failed to win his will. The "power of God unto salvation" means power so to work upon man's will as to renew it; to renew it, but never to dispense with it.

Salvation, just because it involves conformity to the likeness of Christ, is a life-long process. With such an ideal there can be no finality in attainment. The ideal is ever expanding; it has infinity at the heart of it. The greater attainments one makes in response to its demands, so much the more does he discover still greater attainments to which it is summoning him. It was towards the end of his life Paul made this confession of what the lure of the ideal meant to him; "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself

yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (*Phil.* 3.12-14).

With such a view of what is involved in salvation, it is not surprising that Paul should say to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (*Phil.* 2.12). The context in which these words occur leaves us in no doubt as to what he means by "working out salvation." There has been some friction in the Christian community at Philippi, some lack of thoughtful considerateness of one and another member of the community in their behaviour towards fellow-members. Paul is appealing to them to cultivate worthier tempers, to have a better "mind." "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or vainglory but in lowliness of mind each esteeming other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." Then he reminds his readers of the ideal by which their life as members of a community of disciples of Christ should be ruled. "Have this mind in you, which was

also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped at to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." To have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, to be inspired with the spirit of Christ, to be controlled by the power of self-effacing, self-sacrificing love, that is salvation. To be ever striving to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, that is to be working out salvation.

In calling upon his Philippian converts to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling Paul hastens to assure them that he is not throwing them back upon their own meagre resources. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; *for* (and this is the ground of encouragement) it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to work." God is with them as their ever-present unseen Friend. He is at work with them and in them to renew and strengthen their wills by the power of His redeeming love. *Therefore* they can work out their own salvation.

> Salvation is worked out in the atmosphere of love,
> Yet once again I tell thee—life and love
> These are not twain but one, for love is life.

. . . . . .

He that for love's sake yieldeth up his flesh,
He only findeth true salvation.
Love is salvation, love is happiness,
Yea, love is heaven, and God Himself is Love.*

Salvation is of God. The "power unto salvation" is the power of the redeeming love of God as manifested in the life and Cross of Jesus. On this the Godward side of salvation we have already dwelt at some length. But in the life and Cross of Jesus we have a manifestation not only of the love of God as the Saviour of men but also of the life of love into which men are saved, of love which inspires them to give themselves in service to their fellows. This manward side of salvation was emphasized by Jesus, and especially when the dark shadow of the Cross was falling across His path. When "they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem," Jesus, after His rebuke to the sons of Zebedee for their unseemly request, said to them "The cup that I drink ye shall drink, and with the baptism I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized" (*Mark* 10.39). In words addressed to the Twelve He gave a further intimation that His disciples were to be sharers of the love which was inspiring Him to serve His fellows through His sufferings and Cross. "Whosoever would be great among you, shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be bondservant of all.

* Narayan Tilak, the modern Hindu Christian poet.

For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (*Mark* 10.43-45).

This sharing of the love of Jesus as manifested in His sufferings and Cross was, as we have already seen, an outstanding feature of Paul's interpretation of the ethical ideal for the Christian. It was his great ambition to have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, to become conformed unto His death. In the Cross of Christ he found not only the supreme expression of the fatherly love of God for His estranged children, but also the supreme expression of the serving and self-sacrificing love which was to be the ideal for the saved life.

Of the Cross as the ideal of the Christian life, we hear much from Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*. He is not greatly pre-occupied with the Cross as the expression of the fatherly love of God; and this may account for the fact that he does not always strike the note of radiant joy which we hear sounding on through Paul's epistles. But of the Cross as the Christian ideal Thomas speaks with extraordinary fervour. "In the Cross is salvation. . . . He went before, bearing His Cross, and died for thee on the Cross; that thou mayest also bear thy Cross and desire to die on the Cross with Him. . . . Behold! in the Cross all doth consist, all lieth in our dying thereon; for there is no other way unto

life, and unto true inward peace, but the way of the holy Cross, and daily mortification. . . . Set thyself therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, who out of love was crucified for thee."* This is a constantly recurring theme in *The Imitation ;* and here Thomas, like Paul, has sat at the feet of the Crossbearer who said to His disciples, " He that doth not take his cross, and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth life shall lose it ; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it " (*Matt.* 10.38–39).

Our review of what Paul means by salvation suggests that he regarded it as something to be experienced here and now, and not merely something to be hoped for in a distant future. Not infrequently salvation has been conceived as essentially an escape from future suffering and the enjoyment of future happiness. What such a conception of salvation throws into prominence is not the supreme worth of a Christlike life, but the supreme importance to be assigned in human life to pain and pleasure. It is perilously congruent with an interpretation of human life to which Jeremy Bentham gave expression in these well-known sentences: " Nature has placed man under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure.*

* Bk. II, ch. 12.

It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do . . . They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think . . . " * This idea of man being under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure, has infected Christian theology. Its vitiating influence is seen in the conception of salvation implied in the definition of virtue given by Archdeacon Paley, a contemporary of Bentham. " Virtue is the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness." By way of explaining what he means, he gives this as an illustration : " Let it be asked why am I obliged to keep my word ? The answer will be, Because I am urged to do so by a violent motive, (namely the expectation of being rewarded after this life, if I do, or punished for it, if I do not)." † Moral values are not here ignored. They have a place, but a subordinate place. They are means to gain a more important end—everlasting happiness. That is, a Christlike life is not salvation here and now, it is merely a requirement for securing a future salvation, for securing escape from pain and the enjoyment of happiness.

Such an interpretation of the meaning of man's life is foreign to the mind of Paul as a Christian or even as a Pharisee. A world in

* *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation.*
† *Moral and Political Philosophy.* Bk. 1, ch. 7; Bk. 11, ch. 3.

which man is governed by the two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure, and in which salvation is to be sought and found in escape from pain and enjoyment of pleasure, is not the world in which Paul moved. The man who lived the life he did, who rejoiced in his sufferings, who took pleasure in weaknesses, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, would have mocked at such a miserably poor interpretation of the meaning of human life and of salvation. As a Pharisee his ruling ambition had been to be a good man; as a Christian his ruling ambition was to have "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." Christ-likeness *was* salvation, a salvation which could be his here and now. The completion of salvation, indeed, was still in the future, but the salvation to be experienced in the future was not different in kind from the salvation experienced here and now. It was to be the full fruition of the Christlike life already begun. As he himself puts it, the present Christlike life is "the earnest of the spirit," the first instalment of the fuller life of the spirit that is yet to be. Or, as he expresses the same thought with the help of a different figure, the present Christlike life is a seed which will ripen hereafter into a harvest: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap . . . He that soweth unto the spirit shall of the spirit reap eternal life" (*Gal.* 6.7–8).

III

THE FORENSIC THEORY

CHAPTER IX

THE FORENSIC THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT

IN the statement of this theory by different theologians there is much variety of opinions upon points of minor importance. In our statement of it in the following paragraphs we confine our attention to the broad and generally accepted outlines.

Men are by nature, so the theory takes its starting point, in an estate of sin and misery. They are in bondage to sin, a bondage which, if it persists, can have no other issue than eternal suffering. But God in His pity and love has purposed to intervene for their deliverance from this bondage and to make them meet for a life of eternal blessedness in heaven.

God, however, is confronted with an obstacle which must be got out of the way before His purpose of love can be carried out.

God has decreed and made known that every violation of the laws He has prescribed for man in the conduct of his life will be followed (or punished) by certain painful consequences here and hereafter. If God is to be true to His

character as a righteous Lawgiver and Judge and to safeguard the moral interests of the universe of which He is the Governor, these consequences of sin must first be adequately dealt with if God is to be free to carry out His purpose to deliver sinners from their bondage of sin. How to adjust His loving purpose with what is demanded of Him as a righteous Judge—this is what has been described as " the problem for God."

Sinful man cannot pay the penalties due to his sin, for eternity is needed for their payment. He may in this life pay part of these penalties, but not the major part, eternal suffering in the future life. So long as this major part of the penalties is unpaid, there is no hope of his deliverance from the bondage of sin, and of the renewed life which is to make him meet for heaven.

Some other than sinful man himself must be found to endure in his room this major part of the penalties of sin. This other is the eternal Son of God. He becomes man that, partaker of human nature, He may endure for all men, or at least for such as will be eventually saved, the penal consequences of their sin ; if not precisely these very consequences, at least their equivalent in intensity. If it be asked how One man in the course of His finite life could endure the eternal sufferings of so vast a number of individuals, the answer is that

as this One man is God as well as man His sufferings have an infinite value.

God is now free, as He was not before, to carry out His purpose of love for sinners in consistency with His character as a righteous Judge, but on certain conditions being fulfilled by sinners. God demands that they on their part take up an appropriate attitude towards what Christ has thus done on their behalf. Faith is the usual word for this appropriate attitude. Such faith involves a belief that Christ has so borne the penalties due to sin that God can justly remit them. Repentance is usually regarded as a necessary concomitant of faith, but the prominence is given to faith, in order to bar out the intrusion of the idea that repentance merits the remission of sin's penalties. Further, to indicate that faith is no mere intellectual assent to a doctrine about the work of Christ, it is often added that faith involves *fiducia*, that is, trust in the love of God which has devised the gracious means whereby the penalties of sin may be remitted in consistency with the divine justice.

Faith which secures the remission of sin's penalties is only the beginning of God's gracious work with the sinner. It is fruitful in results. God becomes reconciled to the sinner, receives him into His favour, bestows upon him the gift of the Spirit through whose working he is renewed in his inmost nature, lives henceforth

in fellowship with God as a son with his Father and is made more and more meet for the life of eternal blessedness.

Such is a bare outline of the forensic theory of the Atonement. To this theory, or at least to something akin to it, Milton has given memorable expression in Book III of *Paradise Lost.* It may here be worth while to quote the following passages:

[The Almighty Father speaks.]

> . . . . . Man falls, deceived.
> . . . . . Man, therefore, shall find grace.
> (line 130.)

> Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will;
> Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
> Freely vouchsafed.
> (line 173.)

> Man disobeying . . . . . .
> To expiate his treason hath nought left
> But, to destruction sacred and devote,
> He with his whole posterity must die;
> Die he or Justice must; unless for him
> Some other, able and as willing, pay
> The rigid satisfaction, death for death.
> Say, Heavenly Powers, where shall we find such love?
> Which of you will be mortal, to redeem
> Man's mortal crime, and just, the unjust to save?
> Dwells in all heaven charity so dear?
> (line 203–216.)

[The Son of God speaks.]

> Father, Thy Word is passed, Man shall find grace;
> And shall Grace not find means?
> . . . . . .

Behold *me*, then: me for him, life for life,
I offer; on me let thine anger fall;
Account me Man: I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to Thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleased; on me let Death wreak all his rage.
(line 227.)

[The Almighty Father addresses the Son.]

So Man, as is most just,
Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die,
And dying rise, and, rising, with him raise
His brethren, ransomed with his own dear life.
(line 294.)

[The multitude of angels address the Heavenly Father.]

No sooner did Thy dear and only Son
Perceive thee purposed not to doom frail Man
So strictly, but much more to pity inclined,
He, to appease thy wrath, and end the strife,
Of mercy and justice in thy face discerned,
Regardless of the bliss wherein he sat
Second to thee, offered himself to die
For Man's offence. O unexampled love!
Love nowhere to be found less than Divine!
Hail, Son of God, Saviour of men!
(line 403.)

Whatever may be the defects of this forensic theory of the Atonement, it is right to recognize, and to recognize with warm appreciation, that it has concentrated attention upon some essential features of the Christian faith.

In the first place, by the emphasis it has put on sin it has kept in the foreground the supremacy of moral interests. In many ways it has deepened the sense of sin being *the* evil in human life. Sin has been set forth as that

which separates man from God in whose fellowship is man's chief good, and as that which, if persisted in, has its issue in eternal ruin. And emphasis upon the suffering and death of Christ in connection with sin has had immense power in keeping alive and deepening the sense of the evil of sin : the Cross of Christ has convinced the world of sin, as nothing else.

In the second place, this theory has laid stress on the need of God's grace, if sinful men are to be delivered from their evil plight and restored to filial fellowship with God and to the new life of filial obedience in which such fellowship has its issue. Man cannot save himself ; the God of grace must intervene for his salvation. It is to grace, and not to any " meritorious " works of their own, that sinful men owe their right relation to God and their ethical life.

In the third place, this theory, as it has been turned to account in the Reformed Churches for the fostering of the spiritual life, has pressed men in upon the secret places of the soul. It has served to bring the individual face to face with the God who confronts him in conscience. It has helped the individual to realize that there are two great realities in human life—the soul and its God.

While we recognize that the forensic theory of the Atonement has concentrated attention upon some essential features of the Christian

faith, we have on the other hand to recognize that this theory from several points of view has given rise, and is still giving rise, to serious difficulty for not a few persons who are loyal in devotion to Jesus as the Lord of their life. The theory seems to them to have an unhappy bearing, at least as it has been sometimes expounded, upon the interpretation of (1) the character of God, (2) sin and its consequences, (3) Divine forgiveness, (4) faith, (5) the ministry of Jesus.

We go on to consider briefly the bearing of the theory upon these five topics.

1. The Character of God.

The forensic theory, as the name given to it suggests, takes us into the atmosphere of the criminal law-court. It is after the analogy of a judge in a law-court that God is interpreted in His attitude to sinners while they are still unreconciled to Him. God is, of course, more than Legislator and Judge. He is a loving Father, who longs for the recovery of His lost children, who has sent His Son into the world to make their recovery possible by enduring the penalties due to their sin, and who, when they have acknowledged and accepted by faith what Christ has done for them, will welcome them into filial fellowship with Himself as their Father. But in his relations with sinners, while they are still unreconciled to Him, God is essentially a Judge, standing aloof from

sinners as a judge in the law-court stands aloof from the criminal at the bar. God is not conceived as a loving Father, who comes very close to His estranged children, who is encompassing them with His reconciling love, who is at work in their heart with all the resources of a fatherly love that cannot be repressed.*

This conception of God as bearing Himself towards His estranged children not as a Father but as a Judge has sometimes led to strange interpretations of the character of God. An American theologian of last century has said: "Retributive justice is necessary in its operation . . . The eternal Judge may or may not exercise mercy, but he must exercise justice." Another American theologian of last century has said: Justice or retributive righteousness is "a principle of God's nature, not only independent of love, but superior to love." "As we may be kind, but must be righteous, so God in whose image we are made, may be merciful, but must be holy. Mercy is optional with Him. Love is an attribute, which, like omnipotence, God may exercise, or not exercise, as He will. . . . Justice must be done always."†

"God is Love"—that is the New Testament

* With reference to sinners who *have been reconciled to God*, Principal William Cunningham says: "God has virtually laid aside, as far as they are concerned, the character of a Judge, and *assumed* that of a Father."—(The italics are ours.) *Historical Theology*, II, p. 97.

† Quoted as exaggerated statements, by Professor G. B. Stevens, *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation*, pp. 175, 178.

conception of what is most fundamental in the character of God, and it is precisely the sinner, while he is still unreconciled, who is in need of the working of the fatherly love of God in his heart. The need of this fatherly love of God for the sinner has been set forth by Dr. R. C. Moberly in a singularly impressive illustration. "Consider, then, the case of a man in whose character we may happen to be interested very closely, and whose character is unmistakably bad. The daily hope and prayer in respect of him is that he may not be that which he is, and may become what he is not. But what is to be done? One thing is plain from the first. He must not be simply left alone. To leave him wholly to himself is to abandon hope. Instinctively you rather ask, who is there about him? has he a mother? a sister? a high-principled companion? a really good friend? If he has; there, you say at once, is the point of hope. . . . (What is needed is) not a friend who will lecture, so much as a friend who will bear: not a friend who is ready to separate himself from, but a friend who is willing to enter into, the shadow of the cloud of misery and sin; who has become already, in that willingness, a hope and an earnest of the penitent character, even of the man who does not, as yet, himself, repent, or amend, or (hardly even) desire."* So the

* *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 75, 76.

point of hope for the sinner is something more than the retributive justice of God; it is the working in his heart of the love of God as Father, of the love of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In yet another direction does the forensic theory as sometimes expounded tend to compromise the character of God as a God of love. With reference to the sufferings and death of Jesus, as the payment of the penalties to which sinners are liable, it has been often said that God inflicted punishment upon Jesus and that Jesus endured it. Fifty years ago I listened to a sermon on the text: "Our God is a consuming fire." The preacher, himself one of the most genial of men, pictured the guilty sinner standing before God the Father who was about to plunge the sword clutched in His hand into the bared breast of the sinner. Christ the Son stepped in between the guilty sinner and the avenging Father, received the descending sword in His own breast, and thus rescued the sinner from his threatened fate. That may have been an exceptionally crude picture of the strife between the divine love and the divine justice. But however the picture may be toned down, the conception of the infliction of punishment by God and of its endurance by Christ tends, illegitimately it may be, to foster the idea that God the Father is less loving towards sinners than Christ. To

God's love, of course, the sending of Christ to endure punishment is to be traced back. As a matter of fact, however, under the influence of the forensic theory the divine love in its tenderness and strength has too often been associated with Christ the Son rather than with God the Father. So there has been an obscuring of the fatherly love of God which has availed to lessen His attractiveness for the guilty sinner. The significance of "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" has been too much lost sight of.

2. Sin and its consequences.

Working with the analogy of the criminal law-court the forensic theory has tended to put undue emphasis upon sin as a violation of statutory precept in contrast with sin as a failure of the inner self to be loyal to God and to God's ideals for the life of His children. What a Judge in the law-court is mainly concerned with is not the inner self of the accused person at his bar, but the question whether he has been guilty or not guilty of the violation of a specified law. Sin is indeed a violation of law, but it is more. It is an evil condition of the inner self. This deeper interpretation of sin is not ignored by the upholders of the forensic theory. It is even pushed to exaggeration when man in his unrenewed state is declared to be "totally depraved." Here the analogy of the law-court is not pressed.

But where it is pressed, sin is conceived as essentially a violation of statutory precept.

If there has been a tendency to interpret sin after the analogy of the law-court, this is true also of the interpretation of the consequences of sin. Attention is concentrated upon the physical consequences of sin, as in the law-court.

In our chapter on what Paul means by the wrath of God we referred to three kinds of the unhappy consequences of sin: (i) physical suffering, (ii) the torments of a guilty conscience and (iii) the worsening of the moral self. The torments of a guilty conscience and the worsening of the moral self are not taken into account by the forensic theory, when it insists that God could not in consistency with His character as a righteous Judge receive sinners into His favour unless Christ had paid the penalties due to their sin. *These* penal consequences could not but be ignored here, for Christ could not be thought of as enduring the torments of a guilty conscience or the worsening of the moral self. But this raises a difficulty for the theory. If divine justice demanded that before God could receive sinners into His favour the unhappy consequences of sin which in His ordering of the moral universe He had attached to sin should first be dealt with, why should the physical consequences alone be singled out? This question raises a further

question, a fundamental question: May there not be something radically wrong with the assumption that before God can receive sinners into His favour the penal consequences decreed by God for sin must be endured by Christ?

It is with the physical, not the moral, consequences of sin the forensic theory concerns itself. Not much is said about the physical consequences of sin in the present life. One difficulty here is that those who are received into God's favour on the ground of their faith in what Christ has endured on their behalf are not wholly exempted from enduring in their own persons the physical consequences of their former sins. The main stress is therefore laid upon the eternal suffering in a future life decreed by God as the punishment due to sin unrepented of and unforgiven. "The threat of eternal condemnation, of hell, which was held out against sin, had been regarded as the punishment that God in His good pleasure had appointed; and anything else that might possibly be regarded as punishment thereof was not taken into account—not in theological theory at least."* The conception of eternal suffering as *the* punishment of sin is therefore usually associated with the forensic theory of the Atonement, and it is usually taken for granted that this conception can claim the

* Ritschl, *The History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 339.

authority, if not of the Old Testament, at least of the New Testament.

Emphasis upon physical suffering here and hereafter as the consequence of sin may help to awaken sinners to a sense of sin as an evil condition of the inner self, but it may be so handled as to foster the idea that sin is chiefly to be feared for the physical suffering it brings in its train, and that salvation is to be found in escape from such suffering.

3. Divine forgiveness.

Here the analogy of the law-court has had a disturbing and confusing influence. In connection with the law-court pardon is a remission of the penalty pronounced by the Judge. It is granted, not by the Judge, but by a representative of the executive to whom it belongs to decide whether in any particular case the interests of the commonwealth will be better served by a remission of the penalty than by its infliction. (Such pardon is not conditioned by another than the offender suffering the penalty.) This remission of penalty is rightly spoken of as pardon; it cannot well be spoken of as forgiveness. Forgiveness implies a close personal relation between the person who forgives and the person who is forgiven. Between the representative of the executive government and the criminal whose punishment is remitted there is, or at least there may be, no such personal

relation. They may never have been in touch with each other, they may never even have seen each other. The offender who is pardoned is not received into the favour of the representative of the executive government. That is, he cannot be said to be forgiven.

In the forensic theory of the Atonement a distinction may sometimes seem to be made, implicitly if not explicitly, between pardon and forgiveness. Pardon, as a remission of penalty, is regarded as an indispensable preliminary condition of being forgiven; that is, of *experiencing* forgiveness. The sinner, the penalty of whose sin has been remitted, is, as the result of his being pardoned, received into God's favour, has the experience of God's forgiving love and has bestowed upon him the gift of the Spirit by whose gracious working he is renewed and made meet for heaven. But it often happens that in the use of the two words there is no fixity in the meaning to be attached to them. Pardon may sometimes denote the experience of the forgiving love of God, and forgiveness may sometimes denote little more than the remission of the penalties of sin. But whatever confusion there maybe in the use of the words pardon and forgiveness, the remission of the penalties of sin is not the same thing as the experience of the forgiving love of God. A remission of penalty is conceivable apart from an experience of forgiveness,

and an experience of forgiveness is conceivable where the question of a remission of penalty does not arise.

Experience of the forgiving love of God is by no means ignored in the forensic theory, but there is a tendency to concentrate undue attention upon the remission of the penalties due to sin in the future life. So the way is opened up for interpreting salvation as mainly escape from eternal suffering hereafter, not as deliverance from the evil self here and now. And the way is opened up for the intrusion of that "otherworldliness" (in the disparaging sense of the term) which is alien to the genius of Christianity, but which, however, has been prevalent enough to lead Adam Smith in speaking of religious instruction to say: "This is a species of instruction of which the object is not so much to render the people good citizens in this world as to prepare them for another and better world in the life to come." *

4. Faith.

The conception of faith is affected by the emphasis which the forensic theory lays upon the remission of the penalties due to sin.

At the centre of God's overture to sinful man, according to this theory, is the provision He has made through the sufferings and death of Christ for the remission of these penalties. What God looks for on man's part in response

* *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. 5, ch. 1, art. 3.

to His gracious overture is faith, faith interprets as the acknowledgment and acceptance of what Christ has done to make it possible for a just God to remit the penalties which must otherwise have been endured by the sinner.

It is not unnatural that faith so interpreted should seem to involve little more than an intellectual assent to a theological doctrine, to the specific theological doctrine embodied in the forensic theory of the Atonement. But, as we have already noted, qualifications are introduced. Faith is usually interpreted as involving repentance and trust in the love of God. There is, however, a reluctance to enrich the content of faith, to draw out the implications of Paul's phrase, "faith working by love." This reluctance is due to the fear lest the remission of the penalties of sin should be looked upon as in part dependent on something sinful man can do, and not exclusively on God's grace. The difficulties which are raised in this connection, and which are not easily solved, may stir the asking of the question whether the emphasis laid on the remission of penalties may not mean entering upon a track that misleads.

If faith is essentially the acknowledgment and acceptance of what Christ has done to make possible the remission of the penalties of sin, its connection with the new life of the believing man does not seem to be inevitable.

Where, however, faith is interpreted as the response, involving the forthputting of the powers of heart and will and mind, to the appeal of God in Christ to His estranged children to come back to their Father whose love has never ceased to be at work with them, and to identify themselves loyally with the ideals for their life set before them in the life of Jesus, there is no difficulty in understanding how such faith should have its inevitable issue in a new Christlike life, in new effort and new achievement. But where faith is interpreted in the other sense, the connection between faith and the new life is not obvious. Sometimes the connection is sought in gratitude to Christ for His endurance of the penalties of sin. Sometimes God is represented as simply bestowing on those who have exercised faith the gift of the Spirit through whose working the new life is inexplicably brought into being. In either case the new life is not involved in the very nature of faith itself.

The conception of faith associated with the forensic theory has not infrequently been attended by certain unhappy accompaniments. Persons not seriously minded, taking for granted that by their faith they have secured salvation from eternal suffering in the future, have been tempted to live "at ease in Zion." For those who are seriously minded there has been risk of another sort. They know that faith, if it

is genuine, should have its issue in a Christlike life. In view of much in their life that is un-Christlike they are tortured with the fear lest their faith has not been such as to secure the remission of the penalties of their sin and their admission hereafter into heaven.

5. The Ministry of Jesus.

Emphasis on the remission of the penalties of sin has often tended to weaken appreciation of the unique significance of the personality of Jesus as expressed in His life and teaching. This does not mean that there has been a tendency to lower the conception of the uniqueness of the Person of Christ: it was essential in the forensic theory to lay the strongest emphasis on Jesus as the God-man. What is meant is that there has been a tendency to be less pre-occupied than is fitting with the revelation of the character of God and of what is possible for man and human society, which has been given to the world through the life and teaching of Jesus.

As an illustration of the unhappy tendency referred to, a sentence may be quoted from Dr. Dale: "The death of Jesus, not His living ministry, was to reverse the evil fortunes of the race." * To pit the death of Jesus over against His living ministry in this fashion may be a legitimate consequence of adopting a forensic theory of the Atonement, but it is to

* *The Atonement*, p. 80.

take an unfortunate line in interpreting the work of Christ. It is only in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus and of the virulence of the hostility which His life and teaching provoked that we get to understand the amazing love which was at the heart of His sufferings and Cross. And, on the other hand, His sufferings and Cross were not only an integral but the crowning part of His living ministry.

The personality of Jesus, with which we are brought into touch through the story of His "living ministry," is the miracle of miracles in the history of humanity. It is the personality of Jesus which is more and more coming to be recognized as the central factor in the Christian religion, and which is more and more making its appeal to the heart and conscience of mankind. Any interpretation of the death of Jesus which tends to throw the personality of Jesus, as expressed through His living ministry, into the background is not likely to retain its former place in Christian thought.

It is generally acknowledged that the forensic theory of the Atonement, at least as it was wont to be expounded, calls for some revision. But there is also a fairly wide-spread conviction that, in view of the weight of authority which is believed to be behind it, it must be retained in some modified form.

It is with this alleged weight of authority the following three chapters are concerned.

CHAPTER X

IN THE LIGHT OF THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS

THE forensic theory of the Atonement moves in the atmosphere of the law-court. When we listen to Jesus we are in the atmosphere of the home. It is of God as Father, not as Judge, Jesus is wont to speak. He illustrates the bearing of God towards sinful men, not by that of a Judge towards a criminal at the bar, but by that of a loving father towards his erring child. The picture of the father of the prodigal son is not an exceptional but a constantly recurring feature of His teaching about God's bearing towards His wayward estranged children. The love of a father for his erring child Jesus finds to be indeed no adequate illustration of the strength and tenderness of the love of God for His children. The love of God outstrips the love of the best of earthly fathers. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (*Matt.* 7.11).

An earthly father's love is not dammed back till his erring child has mended his ways. Rather is it drawn out by the evil plight of his erring child. It is just there, where it is most needed, his love reaches its full height. How much more is this true of the heavenly Father! This love is at work with His children, while they are still estranged from Him, while they are still His enemies. In this connection the way in which Jesus pleads with His disciples to love their enemies is worthy of special notice. "Love your enemies, and pray for them which persecute you: that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (*Matt.* 5.44–45). Here love to those who have wronged us is brought into comparison with the love of God to those by whom He has been wronged. If we still love one who has wronged us, we do not draw off from him till he comes to us with his confession of wrong-doing. Love goes to work upon him. Love urges us to take the first step towards reconciliation; to break down his enmity by repaying evil with good; to be ever on the outlook for opportunities of winning him for a friend. Thus to love our enemy is to be a son of our Father in heaven; that is, it is to be like God. So Jesus would teach us that God does not stand aloof from His estranged children, but

that His love is ever pressing in upon them, if by any means He may win them back to Himself as dear children.

In the teaching of Jesus about the bearing of God towards sinful men no hint is thrown out that the love of God cannot flow forth upon them till they have acknowledged and accepted what He Himself will yet do on their behalf to make it possible for God to remit the penalties of their sin.

Nor is there any hint of this in the story of the dealings of Jesus with sinful men and women. His love went out to them while they were still sinners. His bearing towards them was rightly understood by the Pharisees and the scribes, who "murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (*Luke* 15.2). Had the publicans and sinners first left off their evil ways, the Pharisees themselves would have been willing to receive them. But to receive them and to eat with them while they were still impenitent seemed to the Pharisees to be tampering with moral interests, and as the custodians of moral interests they murmured against Jesus and withstood Him. In three parables He explained why, instead of waiting for sinners to become morally better, He went amongst them just as they were and got into close, friendly touch with them. Love was the secret of that way of His with sinners which seemed to the Pharisees so puzzling

and so dangerous. These sinful men and women were lost, lost to God their loving Father, lost to the life God had purposed for them, lost to co-operation with God in carrying out His loving purpose for their fellows. It was precisely their evil plight as lost children of their Father in heaven which set the love of Jesus on fire. Love left Him no choice but to get alongside them as their Brother and their Saviour, to bear the burden of their immeasurable loss upon His own heart, to suffer with them and for them, if by any means He might make them sharers in His own life of fellowship with God and of loving service to others. In thus receiving sinners and eating with them was He, as the Pharisees believed, imperilling moral interests? By the outgoing of a passionate, self-sacrificing love like this was He not furthering moral interests with incomparably greater effectiveness than the Pharisees and the scribes who murmured against Him?

In His treatment of sinful men and women, then, there is nothing to suggest that the outgoing of His love was repressed till they acknowledged and accepted what He was to do on their behalf to secure the remission of the penalty of their sins. And if His love was the expression of the love of His Father in heaven, there is nothing to suggest that the outgoing of His Father's love was limited by any such condition.

If that condition belongs to the "heart of

the gospel," how are we to explain the silence of Jesus here ?

It is usually recognized that in His general teaching about God's relation to sinners and in His own dealings with sinners, Jesus has little or nothing to say about the outgoing of God's love being thus conditioned. But, it is said, there are some recorded sayings of His in which His silence on this subject is broken.

The following are the four exceptional sayings which are usually referred to in this connection :

1. " Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many " (*Mark* 10.43–44).

These words were spoken when Jesus saw the path that lay before Him darkened more and more by the shadow of the Cross. They were an appeal to the Twelve to have done with their selfish ambitions, to share the spirit of their Master whose highest ambition was to serve others, even to the giving up of His life for their sakes. The word " ransom " suggests that His service to others was to be rendered at great cost to Himself. It does not in itself suggest that the giving up of His life was the endurance of the penalties of sin to make

possible for sinners the remission of the penalty of their sin and their reception into God's favour.

2. "And He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many *unto remission of sins*" (*Matt.* 26.27–28). (The words italicized do not occur in Mark or Luke or in Paul's account of the Last Supper, but they need not therefore be regarded as an interpolation in Matthew.)

"Remission of sins" is not to be interpreted offhand as remission of the penalties of sin. Another interpretation is not only possible but probable. In Jewish circles the removal of outward evils, interpreted as expressions of God's hostility to sin, was associated with restoration to God's favour; was regarded as a sign and assurance of restoration to God's favour. The penalties of sin here taken into account are not eternal sufferings in the future life, but sufferings in the present life, and their "remission" is not something to be hoped for in the future, but something to be experienced in the present. Here the remission of the penalties of sin is the removal of present outward evils. As the removal of these present outward evils was closely associated with restoration to God's favour, the phrase "remission of sins" might readily come to denote the beginning of a new life of fellowship

with God, a new experience of the forgiving love of God, and a cleaner life ensuing.

In all this there seems to be no fitting place for such an idea as that God could not in consistency with His justice remove these present outward evils, interpreted as the penalties of sin, from one set of persons except on the condition that they should be endured by another set of persons or by another person.

3. "And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from Him, And he said, Father, all things are possible unto Thee: remove this cup from Me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt" (*Mark* 14.35–36).

The story of the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane arrests the reader. It stirs him to think of what it must have cost Jesus to serve His fellows in giving up His life for their sakes. There is something here awe-inspiring, soul-subduing. There is something here which is mysterious, which we could only fully understand if we could fully understand the heart and mind of Jesus. The attempt to explain it by the suggestion that in His last sufferings Jesus was conscious that God was inflicting upon Him the punishment which must otherwise have been inflicted upon sinners does not account for the prayer: "Father . . . remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will,

but what thou wilt." If Jesus had believed that only by the endurance of His sufferings and death as the punishment of the sins of men could they be received into God's favour, if this was the Cup the Father had given Him to drink, could He have prayed: "Father remove this cup from me?"

4. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Both Matthew and Mark relate that at the ninth hour, the last hour of the suffering on the Cross, Jesus uttered these words of the first verse of the twenty-second Psalm. Luke does not refer to this utterance, but he relates that in this same last hour, "When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," was wrung from a mysterious experience which, like the experience of the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, tells of what it cost Jesus to suffer and to die upon the Cross in His loving service to His fellows. We may be baffled in our attempts to interpret it.

May it be that suddenly and for a passing moment He was haunted by a sense of the failure of His life-work? * He had been no stranger to the pain of disappointment. He had

* Cf. a sentence of Canon Streeter: "It is just because the Christ did so despair, did so, to use a slang phrase, touch absolute bottom, that we feel His fellowship with us ordinary men." *Reality: A New Correlation of Science and Religion*, p. 200.

sorrowed over the fickleness of the people whose early enthusiasm had died down when they realized how hard were the conditions of citizenship in the Kingdom of God. He had sorrowed over the backwardness of His disciples to understand the meaning of His God-given mission. It was from a keen sense of disappointment there was wrung from Him the lament: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (*Luke* 13.34).

In the last hours of His life He had exceptional experience of disappointments. In the garden of Gethsemane He had been betrayed by one of the Twelve and forsaken by the eleven. In the court of the High Priest he had heard Peter say: "I know not this man of whom ye speak." At Pilate's judgment-hall he had heard the wild cries of the people: "Crucify him, Crucify him." He had been hanging on the Cross from the third hour to the ninth amid the jeers of men to whom His love went out and to whose service He had dedicated His life. In such circumstances is it strange that a sense of the failure of His life-work should have forced from Him the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And it was but for a passing moment. Soon there came from

Him another cry: "Father, unto thy hands I commend my spirit."

The cry of Jesus on the Cross may be inadequately explained as the expression of a momentary sense of the failure of His life-work. A suggestion thrown out by some supporters of the forensic theory may seem still more inadequate. One of the penal consequences of sin, according to this suggestion, is separation from God, forsakenness by God, and Christ endured this penal consequence of sin that God in consistency with His justice might be free to let His love flow forth to the sinner who believes in what Christ has thus done for him. If this is the correct interpretation of the cry, how does it happen that there is not the least hint of it in the Gospels or anywhere else in the New Testament?

In our survey of the forensic theory in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus we have found nothing which offers support for it. On the contrary, we have found much more that tells against it.

After reviewing the relation of the first three Gospels to this theory, Principal Forsyth, one of its defenders, asks this question, "Could the doctrine of the Atonement . . . be established on the Synoptics alone, historically and critically searched?" This is his answer: "I do not think it could." Though faced with the fact

that the theory has no support in the life and teaching of Jesus, he is not minded to abandon it. He has his own way of getting over the difficulty. "What they (the apostles) gave was the meaning of Christ, and they gave it, in a way that the earthly Christ could not, in the light of His finished work. The finishing of that work by the Cross was not always perfectly certain in Christ's earthly thought; even in Gethsemane, I have said, He cherished the hope that there might still open up from the Father's will some other way." "*He* did the thing, they saw its meaning and proclaimed it." "The synoptic record alone could not account for the Christian religion." *

The theory which is based on the assumption that Jesus understood less clearly than the apostles the significance of His life-work is surely on the high-road to bankruptcy.

* *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, pp. 142, 166, 175, 270.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE LIGHT OF THE TEACHING OF PAUL

AT the close of the preceding chapter we quoted some sentences of Principal Forsyth in which it seemed to be taken for granted that, though the forensic theory of the Atonement could find little or no support in the record of the life and teaching of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels, it could claim the authority of the apostles. The apostle whose authority is chiefly invoked is Paul. We proceed therefore to consider this theory in the light of Paul's teaching.

If we have given in the earlier chapter of this volume a fairly well-grounded account of Paul's interpretation of the significance of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would seem *a priori* improbable that his authority can justly be claimed for this theory.

The theory moves, as we have already said, in the atmosphere of the law-court. As a Pharisee Paul had moved in this atmosphere. As a Christian he moved in the atmosphere of the home. He could no longer interpret his relations with God by means of legal

categories. Duty to God was no longer interpreted as the observance of legal precepts imposed upon him by God from without, but as the welling up from within of filial loyalty to God's ideals for his life set forth in the life and Cross of Jesus. Nor could he any longer think of God as essentially Legislator and Judge. The God and Father of his Lord Jesus Christ did not stand aloof from His erring children till by their good works they had merited to be received into His favour. His love for them was not merely in existence, waiting to flow out after they had become morally worthier ; it was already flowing out and at work in their hearts while they were still ungodly. God, mirrored in the attitude of Jesus towards sinful men and women, was essentially a God of grace. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (*Rom.* 6.14).

Paul had had experience of being "under law," and he had experience of being "under grace." That two-fold experience of his was the root of his passionate antagonism to legalism in religion, whether in the interpretation of God's attitude to sinners or in the interpretation of the ideal of a truly good life.

Further, Paul was not preoccupied with the problem of God's remission of the penalties of sin in consistency with His justice. Even when he was a Pharisee, the question which engrossed him was not: How can I escape from the

sufferings which are the penal consequence of sin? but this: How can I escape from sin itself? When he cried: "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" what he was passionately longing for was not salvation from suffering, but salvation from the evil self which was holding his better self in bondage.

Still further, it has to be noted that of the unhappy consequences which are attached to sin in the divine ordering of the moral world, what Paul lays stress upon is not physical suffering here or hereafter, but the worsening of the moral self.* If Paul found the main unhappy consequences of sin in moral deterioration and eternal moral ruin, could he have regarded the endurance by Christ of sin's penal consequences as the indispensable condition on which the love of God in consistency with His justice could come into effective operation in the hearts of sinful men?

There are, however, in Paul's epistles passages which, it is contended, prove conclusively that the forensic theory in one form or another can justly claim to have his authority.

These passages may be susceptible of a different interpretation than that which is often put upon them. In considering six of the more important of these passages we indicate

* See Chapter 6.

how they may be interpreted in harmony with his dominant convictions about the sufferings and death of Jesus.

1. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (*2 Cor.* 5.21).

The purpose for which the sinless Christ was "made sin" was that "we might become the righteousness of God in him." The question arises: What is meant by the righteousness of God in Christ? Does it mean that, on the ground of Christ's endurance of the penalties of sin and of His life of perfect obedience, God imputes to the sinner who has faith in what Christ has done for him a righteousness which gives God the right, in consistency with His justice, to receive the sinner into His favour? That would seem to be harking back, in a revised form, to the old Pharisaic notion that God's favour can only be bestowed upon those who are, or are regarded as, righteous.

Another meaning is suggested by Paul's use of the phrase "the righteousness of God" elsewhere. In the epistle to the Philippians we read, "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (*Phil.* 3.8–9). That Paul means

by " the righteousness of God " a truly righteous life rooted in loyal devotion to God in Christ, as contrasted with a mere observance of legal precepts, is indicated by the words which immediately follow those already quoted: " that I may know him . . . and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death " (*Phil.* 3.10). The righteousness which is of God by faith is a righteous life inspired by love like that which was at the heart of the sufferings and death of Jesus.

So much for the meaning of Paul's phrase " the righteousness of God." This other question arises: What does he mean by Christ being " made sin " ? He cannot, of course, mean that Christ was made a sinner. He must have something else in his mind than what his words, interpreted in the strictness of the letter, would suggest. What was that something else ? Does he mean that as God is said to impute the righteousness of Christ to sinful men, so He imputed sin to Jesus, in the sense that Jesus was to bear the penalties of sin to make it possible for God to grant remission of penalties to sinners and receive them into His favour ? A different interpretation is possible, an interpretation more in line with the general trend of Paul's teaching. The love of Jesus for His sinful fellows was ever urging Him to get alongside of them, if by any means they might " become the righteousness of God in him."

Such love brought Him into close and constant touch with their sinful lives; it laid heavy burdens upon His heart. The exceeding love of the sinless Jesus entangled Him in the world of sin and in the world of misery which sin brought in its train. In this sense, at least, He was "made sin."

2. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* * for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (*Rom.* 8.3–4).

For the right understanding of these words, it is important to keep in view that, according to Paul, God's purpose in sending His Son was that we might walk after the Spirit.

In the preceding chapter he has been giving an account of his experience of sore spiritual conflict in his pre-Christian days. He had delighted in the law of God after the inward man. He had a vision of a higher kind of goodness than the mere observance of the precepts of the law, and his better self longed passionately to attain that higher goodness. But he found himself ever thwarted by the

* The italicizing in the R.V. of these words indicates that there are no words corresponding to them in the Greek; that they are a paraphrase rather than a translation. All that the Greek says is "for sin" or "in connection with sin." The paraphrase might be legitimate if we could be sure on other grounds that Paul is working with some form of the forensic theory, but not otherwise.

tyrannous power of his evil self. When he would do good, evil was present with him. The evil self was ever warring against the better self. He was "sold under sin." The cry rose from his tortured soul: "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" There was no way of escape from the evil self by a more scrupulous observance of the precepts of the law. That way he had followed with exceptional conscientiousness, and it led him nowhere but to a great despair. His cry for deliverance from his evil self was at last answered. Jesus Christ came suddenly and amazingly into his life as his Redeemer. The incoming of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, of the spirit of love, delivered him from the power of sin. The tyranny of the evil self was ended. Through Christ his better self was set free to achieve all and more than all he had ever dreamed of.

This experience of Paul interprets for us what he means when he says: "God, sending his own Son . . . for sin . . . condemned sin . . . that we might walk after the spirit." Christ's mission was to deal with sin, with the evil self, which was ruining the lives of men. Through His love working in their hearts He delivered them from the bondage of the evil self, and set them free to walk after the spirit, to fulfil by a love-inspired life the true "requirement of the law." So did Christ deal with the power of sin

God sending His own Son condemned sin, rang sin's death knell.

3. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 *Cor.* 5.14–15).

Paul often speaks of the Christian life as a dying with Christ; that is, as a sharing in the love which was at the heart of Christ's sufferings and death. "We were buried with him in baptism . . . that we might walk in newness of life . . . Our old man was crucified with him . . . that we should no longer be in bondage to sin . . . If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (*Rom.* 6.4-8). "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me: And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (*Gal.* 2.20. Margin of R.V.).

In the passage now under consideration Paul is dealing with insinuations of Judaizing Christians that sometimes he is acting like a man out of his senses, and at other times like a man too dexterously prudent. In reply to these insinuations he makes a disclosure of the the secret of all the activities of his life,

"Whether we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you. For the love of Christ constraineth us." What he has here specially in view is the love of Christ manifested in His dying. It belongs to him as a disciple of Christ and to all disciples of Christ to be sharers of this love of the suffering and dying Jesus. "One died for all, therefore all died." What Jesus aimed at through His suffering and dying was that His fellows should be controlled in their ambitions and activities, not by a regard to their selfish interests, but by a love like His own; in Paul's phraseology, "that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again."

4. "As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them . . . Christ redeemed us * from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus" (*Gal.* 3.10–14).

* "The Apostle is here thinking of the deliverance of himself and of the Jewish race." Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 139. Primarily, "the curse of the law" has reference to the Jewish law, but wherever "law" is regarded as Paul here regards the Jewish law, "the curse of the law" has its appropriate application.

Here it is important to take special notice of the reason Paul gives why Christ became a curse: "That upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus."

As we have seen in the chapter on the Cross and the Law, Paul as a Christian had a lifelong grudge against the law interpreted from a special and restricted point of view. He was "dead to the law" in as far as the mere observance of the precepts of the law was elevated to the position of the ethical ideal, and here what he had in his mind was not merely the observance of the ceremonial precepts of the Jewish law, but also the mere observance of moral precepts, whether Jewish or Gentile. Such an ideal of the truly good life, which had been at the root of his sore unrest of heart in his pre-Christian days, seemed to him to be utterly alien to the mind of Jesus. As the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles he had a special reason for his grudge against the law. He knew as a Pharisee that the way to the acceptance of the Jewish faith, as represented by the synagogue, was blocked for many earnest-minded Gentiles by the demand made upon would-be proselytes for their observance of the precepts of the Jewish law. Jesus, by His life and teaching, had dealt effectually with that obstacle, and had thus opened up a new way of approach to the Gentiles on behalf of the Jewish faith. So Paul could not but be

passionate in his resistance to the demand of Judaizing Christians that Gentile converts should take upon themselves the "yoke" of the Jewish law. In this connection the law seemed to Paul to be an evil thing, and he spoke of it in extraordinarily disparaging terms.

It is in view of law as thus interpreted Paul says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse"; that is, as many as take the mere observance of the precepts of law to be the ideal of the good life for the disciples of Christ are under the power of an evil thing. The scriptural proof which he adduces, "Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law," hardly covers all that he has in his mind. Even if one could justly boast, as he himself could in reference to his life as a Pharisee, that he was "blameless as touching the righteousness which is in the law," but was dominated by the conviction that the mere observance of the precepts of the law was the ideal of the good life for a Christian, Paul would not have hesitated to say that he was "under a curse," under the power of an evil thing.

Christ dealt with this evil thing. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." To understand what Paul means by this, we have to go back to the life and teaching and Cross of Jesus. Jesus was continually insisting upon

the supreme worth of a good heart, of love-inspired service and self-sacrifice for others, as against the mere observance of the precepts of the law. It was that insistence of His which roused the hostility of the Pharisees and the scribes, and brought Him at last to the Cross. It was the "law" which nailed Jesus to the Cross, and the Cross of Calvary is for the Christian the eternal condemnation of "law."

Paul says that Christ in redeeming us from the curse of the law, in redeeming us from "law" as in itself an evil thing, became a curse for us. By His whole life and teaching Jesus was redeeming us from the curse of the law. His death upon the Cross was the seal He put upon His life and teaching. Death by crucifixion was a punishment usually reserved for the worst malefactors. "Cursed," we read in the Old Testament, "is every one that hangeth on a tree." It was a death of this sort, a death associated with exceptional shamefulness, Jesus died in redeeming us from the curse of the law. He Himself became a curse, was treated as one accursed.

With what end in view did Christ redeem Paul and His fellow countrymen from "the curse of the law, having become a curse for them"? That the barrier which separated Gentiles from Jews might be broken down; that the evil thing which blocked for the Gentiles the way to Christ might be removed; in Paul's

own words " that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus." Here there is no hint, explicit or implicit, that Christ became a curse in the sense that He endured the penalties of sin to make it possible for God to receive sinners into His favour.

5. " I am not ashamed of the gospel . . . For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith " (*Rom.* 1.16-17). " But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested . . . even the righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus . . . justified freely by his grace through the *redemption* * that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation (propitiatory, in margin of R.V.) through faith, by his blood, to shew his righteousness † because of the passing over of sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing forth, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just ‡ and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus " (*Rom.* 3.21-26).

For the interpretation of this passage we

* " Perhaps ' liberation ' would be a fairer word than ' redemption ' to translate the Greek word." Denney, Commentary on Romans, in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*. It is at any rate a fairer translation than " the ransom provided," suggested by another New Testament scholar.

† There is no good ground for interpreting the " righteousness " of God as the retributive justice of God in contradistinction to His grace. As love is for Paul the essential feature of the goodness of man, so is love the essential feature of the righteousness of God.

‡ This rendering of the Greek word is due to the assumption that by the " righteousness " of God Paul means His retributive justice. The correct rendering is given in the Margin of the R.V. " righteous."

fall back, as already so often, upon Paul's own experience. His main concern as a Pharisee had been to live a good (righteous) life. He had sought to "attain to righteousness" by a scrupulous observance of the precepts of the law. His quest along this line had issued in failure and despair. It brought him no victory over his evil self, and he knew that in the absence of such victory he could never be truly righteous. After the revelation of God's Son in him he discovered that a truly righteous life was to be attained along a different line. After the shedding abroad in his heart of the love of God and the incoming of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus he was sure that love, love like that of Jesus, was the secret of a truly righteous life. So he contrasts again and again the two lines along which righteousness may be sought. Over against the righteousness which is of the law he sets the righteousness which is of faith, faith in Christ. Over against His own righteousness he sets the righteousness which is of God, the righteousness which springs from fellowship with the God of grace and from loyalty to the ideals for man's life set forth in the life and teaching and Cross of Jesus.

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans Paul announces that the gospel he preaches has to do with "a righteousness of God by faith unto faith." Then, after picturing the lack of true righteousness amongst Jews

as well as amongst Gentiles, he speaks of the good news it is his joy as an apostle of Christ to proclaim. God in Christ has intervened in a marvellous way to deliver both Jews and Gentiles from their lack of righteousness. Up to the coming of Christ, God may seem to have been " passing over " this lack of righteousness, but now in Christ He has come upon the field, equipped with the power of an amazing love. In Christ He has shewn His righteousness, a righteousness which is all quick with love, a righteousness which cannot but express itself in unwearied working upon the hearts of the unrighteous to win them to that life of true righteousness which is the outcome of faith in Jesus.

This righteous love of God manifested in the Cross of Christ, manifested " by his blood," is the power which reconciles sinful men to God. It is propitiatory. It achieves all and more than all that Paul's Gentile readers may have associated with sacrifices offered at their temples to restore the worshipper to right relations with his god.

6. " Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures " (1 *Cor.* 15.3).

This was the belief of the whole Christian Society, as Paul indicates in the passage from which these words are quoted.

No part of the Old Testament would be more likely to be appealed to in this connection than

the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Especially in the Acts of the Apostles and in the First Epistle of Peter do we find the language of this chapter largely drawn upon in connection with the sufferings and death of Jesus. The attractiveness of this chapter for the members of the early Christian Society is readily intelligible. Like the rest of their countrymen, Christians of Jewish birth had been looking for the advent of such a glorious conquering King as Messiah had been pictured by prophets and the writers of apocalypses, not for the advent of such a personality as the servant of the Lord pictured in the later chapters of Isaiah. But they found that the picture of the servant of the Lord was more in keeping with the story of the life of Jesus, especially with the story of His sufferings and crucifixion, than the picture of the Messiah they had been wont to cherish. And they would learn that Jesus Himself had brooded over what the scriptures had said about the servant of the Lord, and that He had said of Himself, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (*Luke 22.27*).

This chapter can never cease to have exceptional interest for Christians in every age. It helps us to interpret the significance of the personality and life of Jesus. It concentrates attention upon vicarious suffering, suffering borne to work out good for others, and

upon Jesus as the Prince of vicarious sufferers.

There is one respect, however, in which this picture of the suffering servant of the Lord seems to fail to rise to the height of the suffering love of Jesus. What is prominent in the picture of the servant of the Lord is his passive acceptance of the sufferings which are laid upon him. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . The Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all . . ." In the story of the life of Jesus we find more than the story of the acceptance of sufferings laid upon Him. It is the story of a love which laid burdens upon itself. His sufferings were incidents on the way of love. Jesus could even welcome sufferings: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (*Luke* 12.50).

The question arises: What is the bearing of this picture of the servant of the Lord upon the forensic theory of the Atonement? As we have said, it concentrates attention upon the vicarious suffering of Jesus, but it offers no support for the idea that the penalties due to sinners must be endured by another, if God is to be free, in consistency with His justice, to let His love be at work in their hearts. That idea might justifiably be read into the

words of the prophet, if there were good grounds for believing that it was an integral factor in his interpretations of God's relations to man. On this point the following statement seems to be fully warranted: "The principle that God's right to forgive is limited by His retributive justice . . . is unknown to the Old Testament and to the later Jewish writings." *

* Professor William Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, p. 88.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

IT is often taken for granted that the forensic theory of the Atonement has been almost universally accepted by the Church throughout the Christian centuries. It is true, of course, that the sufferings and death of Jesus have always had a central place in Christian thought as in Christian experience; that the sufferings and death of Jesus have always been regarded as the expression, not only of God's love to man, but also of His hostility to sin and of His resoluteness in safeguarding and furthering the moral interests of His universe. But the question we have now to consider is this: Has there been an almost universal acceptance of the theory that God could not let His love work effectively in the hearts of sinful men, could not receive them into His favour and bestow upon them the gift of His spirit, before they acknowledged and accepted the sufferings and death of Jesus as the endurance on their behalf of the penalties due to their sin?

It will suffice for our present purpose to draw

attention to some things in the history of Christian thought which have a bearing on this question. We take these in their chronological order.

1. The early centuries.*

It has often been noted by theologians of modern times as a defect in the Christian thought of the early centuries that the doctrine of the Atonement did not receive adequate treatment. That is true, if by the doctrine of the Atonement is meant the forensic theory. This theory, or something akin to it, may be met with in casual statements by Christian thinkers of these centuries, but it had no such commanding place as it has had in the theology of the Western Church since Anselm wrote his tractate *Cur Deus Homo* about the end of the eleventh century. Athanasius and the Christian thinkers of his time found the chief significance of the death of Christ, followed by His resurrection, in relation to the assurance of immortality it secured for believers. Further, for nearly a thousand years there was a widely prevalent belief in the West as well as in the East that the death of Christ was a price paid, not to God for the satisfaction of His retributive justice, but to the Devil that God might do justly by the Devil in delivering sinners from his grievous

* As we have considered at some length Paul's relation to this theory, we do not consider further the apostolic age.

tyranny.* Such an interpretation of the death of Christ seems to us to-day a piece of fantastic mythology, but the fact that it was so widely and so long entertained even by well equipped theologians indicates that the interpretation of Christ's death, as His endurance of the penal consequences of sin to make it possible for God's love to flow forth into the hearts of sinners, cannot in these centuries have had the place it has had in Western Christendom in later centuries.

2. St. Augustine. (354–430 A.D.).

In the *Confessions* of Augustine there is a powerful passage in which he tells of his experience of a sore inward conflict prior to, and leading on to his conversion—a conflict between his better self and the sin by which he was held in bondage, and from which he was earnestly longing to be delivered. "Thus was I sick at heart and tormented . . . rolling and turning myself about in my chain, until that were wholly broken, by which I was now slenderly held, but was held still . . . I said within myself, 'Come, let it be done now, let it be done now.' And as I said it, I was on the point of coming to the resolve. I all but did it, yet I did not do it . . . I made another effort, and almost succeeded, and was within

* Owing largely to Anselm's criticism in *Cur Deus Homo*, the theory of the death of Christ as a ransom price paid to the Devil came to be effectually discredited.

a very little of touching and laying hold of it; and yet I did not reach it, hesitating to die to death, and to live to life; and the evil which I had long been accustomed to had more hold over me than the better life not yet experienced." * In looking back upon his experience in the hour of his conversion he exclaims: "Thou, O Lord, art good and merciful . . . and from the bottom of my heart didst drain out the abyss of my corruption. And the whole change was this, not to will what I willed, but to will what Thou willedst . . . From what deep and low recess was my free-will called forth in a moment, so as to place my neck under Thy 'easy yoke,' and my shoulders to Thy 'light burden,' O Christ Jesus, my Helper and my Redeemer? How sweet did it suddenly become to me, the very doing without the sweetnesses of those toys . . . For Thou didst cast them from me, Thou true and sovereign sweetness." †

Augustine's experience of the conflict between two wills has many points of similarity to the experience of Paul which forced from him the cry: "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" though Paul could not charge himself with the particular sin against which Augustine was fighting. Both were longing for deliverance from the bondage of the evil self, and both found deliverance through the

* Bk. VIII, ch. 11. Translation in Rivington's *Library of Spiritual Works*.

† Bk. IX, ch. 1.

incoming of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. As for Paul, so for Augustine this deliverance was *the* thing he owed to Christ. " In Augustine it is not guilt and pardon that are in the foreground, but moral impotence and renewing grace." *

Though Augustine lays the main stress on the victory over the power of sin which he owed to Christ, historians of Christian doctrine, who have explored his voluminous writings, report that he has a good deal to say about the relation of Christ's death to the remission of the penalties of sin. They also report that he has thrown out the suggestion that man's salvation from sin and its penalties might have been effected, had it so pleased God, in some other way. " They are fools, he says bluntly, who declare that the wisdom of God could not otherwise set man free than by assuming man, being born of a woman, and suffering at the hands of sinners." † Such a suggestion would have seemed to orthodox theologians of later times to destroy the foundation on which the forensic theory of the Atonement was based.

3. Anselm. (1033–1109 A.D.).

Anselm has played quite an exceptional part in the development of the forensic theory of the Atonement. In his little book *Cur Deus*

* Dr. Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 52.
† *ibidem*, p. 59.

Homo we find various ideas which have had a profound influence on subsequent formulations of the theory.

The title of his book, *Cur Deus Homo*, intimates that he means to attempt to explain why God should have become man ; that is, to give an explanation, satisfactory to human reason, of the Incarnation, which he regarded as the central feature of the Christian religion.

His explanation may be thus summarised. To carry out His purpose of salvation for a select number of sinful men,* God became man that the obstacle to the carrying out of His purpose, created by man's sin, might be taken out of the way. Man's sin had robbed God of His honour. Some reparation must be made, if (to use modern phraseology) the interests of the moral order in God's universe were to be safe-guarded. Such reparation could only be made by the death of a man who was at the same time God. The death of the God-man would have an infinite value as against the infinite evil of man's sin. Here we have the answer to the question : Why did God become man ? God became man that such a death might be died. Christ came into the world in order to die. The life and teaching of Jesus have in this connection little or no place. Even His sufferings are left out of account. His

* The idea that Christ died only for the elect was prevalent long before Calvin's time.

death is the one thing which avails for reparation, and makes it possible for God to carry out His saving purpose.

Christ's work of reparation is spoken of as "satisfaction." Here Anselm makes use of one of the categories with which he was familiar in connection with the discipline of the Church. When the penitent sinner was absolved by the priest, certain penances were imposed upon him, by the endurance of which, it was believed, the anger of God would be placated. Such penances were known as "satisfactions." When an innovation was made in the use of this word, and the work of Christ came, as with Anselm, to be referred to as "satisfaction," it was natural enough that Christ should be conceived as placating an angry God.

Another ecclesiastical category was made use of by Anselm. In the Middle Ages much was made of the supererogatory merits of eminent Christians who had done more in their life and service than was strictly obligatory. The Church was the custodian of this "treasury of merits," and could, on the fulfilment of certain more or less easy conditions, transfer the benefit of them to other members of the Church. So Anselm describes Christ's death, not only as "satisfaction," but also as "merit," supererogatory merit which God could transfer or impute to sinners.

Though Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* may justly

be regarded as a fresh starting point for the development of the forensic theory of the Atonement, it compares unfavourably in many respects with formulations of the theory in later times. There is no emphasis on the love of God as the very core of the Incarnation. The reason for the Incarnation is found elsewhere: "God purposed to replace from among men the angels who had fallen." * Further, there is little or no suggestion as to how Christ who died for him is to come into personal touch with the individual sinner and re-create his life.

Here Abelard (1079–1142), a younger contemporary of Anselm, is more in harmony with later interpretations of the Atonement. "The purpose and cause of the Incarnation was that He might illuminate the world by His wisdom and excite it to the love of Himself." "Our redemption . . . is that supreme love of Christ shown to us by His passion, which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but acquires for us the true liberty of sons of God, so that we fulfil all things not so much from fear as from love of Him, who exhibited so great favour towards us; that favour than which, as He Himself testifies, none greater can be found: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.'" †

The divergence between the views of Anselm

* Bk. 1, ch. 19.
† Quoted by Dean Rashdall, *The Idea of the Atonement*, p. 358.

and those of Abelard indicates that there was no official doctrine of the Atonement in the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. (An official doctrine was not formulated till the meeting of the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century.) There were various lines of speculation upon the subject, some of which had an important influence, for good and also for ill, upon the formulation of the doctrine by the Reformers and their successors.

4. The Sixteenth Century and after.

The doctrine of the Atonement had a more prominent place in the Reformed Church than in the Roman Catholic Church. In the Roman Catholic Church this doctrine was mainly the concern of theologians. In the Reformed Church it was the concern of all its members. To quote the words of Principal William Cunningham, "If God, as the only means of saving sinners in a way consistent with the attributes of His nature, the principles of His moral government and the honour of His law, sent His Only-begotten Son into the world to suffer and die for them, it must be of the last importance that men should distinctly and correctly understand *how it is* that the mediatorial work of Christ bears upon their relation to God and their everlasting destiny." * It came to be a widely prevalent view that a

* *Historical Theology*, II, p. 119.

distinct and correct understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement was essential for salvation, and it came also to be a widely prevalent view that the true interpretation of the Atonement was to be found in the forensic theory. That theory was supposed to have behind it the authority of Scripture, and more especially the authority of Christ's apostles. There was no adequate recognition of the fact that its formulation was largely shaped by various conceptions inherited from the Mediaeval Church.

The forensic theory was not universally accepted in the Reformed Church. It was subjected to criticism, but however just this criticism may in part have been, it was blunted by the inadequacy of the reconstruction of the doctrine which the critics proposed to put in its place. It was felt, and felt rightly, that the defenders of the forensic theory were contending for certain vital factors in the Christian faith which were in danger of being ignored or obscured by the critics. So the theory held the field as long as these vital factors were not sufficiently safeguarded.

From the seventeenth century onwards the forensic theory came to be toned down in its details by one and another theologian. The mediaeval pictures of eternal sufferings in hell tended to be less lurid. Less was said of Christ

enduring "the pains of hell," "the dreadful torments of a condemned and lost man"; of Christ placating an angry God by His sufferings and death; of Christ dying only for the elect. (Such features in the presentation of the theory by no means disappeared.) But in spite of such occasional modifications in detail, the essential principle of the forensic theory was maintained. It was still held, as a capital point of orthodoxy in the interpretation of the work of Christ, that by His sufferings and death He so endured the penal consequences of sin as to make it possible for God, consistently with His safe-guarding of moral interests, to let His love for sinners come into effective operation.

By the middle of the last century a fresh orientation in the interpretation of the sufferings and death of Jesus was gaining ground in the churches of the English-speaking peoples. An increased attention to the Jesus of history, to His personality, to the life He lived amongst His fellows, to His teaching about man and his relation to God, was preparing the way for a reconsideration of one and another currently accepted theological theory, including the forensic theory of the Atonement. In this theory a central place had, of course, always been assigned to Christ as the God-man by whose endurance of suffering and death, as the penal consequences of the sins of His fellows,

God's purpose of love towards sinners could alone be carried out. But the Jesus of history was not, at least in this connection, brought into the foreground. There was no sustained effort to go back to the Jesus of history and examine the forensic theory in the light of His own life and teaching.

Two books may be singled out as examples of a reconsideration of the theory from this fresh point of view : *The Nature of the Atonement* by McLeod Campbell, first published in 1856, and *The Vicarious Sacrifice* by Horace Bushnell, first published in 1865.

The forensic theory, in its emphasis on the penal consequences of sin, and on the absolute necessity of these consequences being borne by Christ instead of the sinner, had been supposed to indicate the only adequate way in which God's hostility to sin could be expressed.

By going back to the experience of Jesus in His contact with sinful men and women McLeod Campbell indicates another and a more adequate way in which God's hostility to sin might be expressed. Jesus took the burden of the sins of His fellows upon His own pure and loving heart. The bearing of that burden involved Him in a unique experience of sorrow, a sorrow which can only be measured by the uniqueness of His purity and love. That sorrow was an expression of His hostility to sin. Such sorrow

" would be the true and proper satisfaction to offended justice . . . There would be more atoning worth in one tear of the true and perfect sorrow . . . than in endless ages of penal woe." * To speak of such sorrow as " vicarious repentance " or " vicarious confession " is to make use of misleading phraseology; and still more misleading is it to speak of " expiation by confession " and of Christ's confession of sin as " absorbing the wrath of God." Such phraseology is quite inadequate to express the writer's thought; it is borrowed from the forensic theory against which this book is one sustained protest. But however unhappy he may occasionally be in his choice of phraseology, he is right in laying stress upon the sorrow of Jesus in contact with sinful men and women as an expression of His hostility to sin. And God's hostility to sin he finds expressed in this sorrow of Jesus. " The sufferer (Jesus) suffers what He suffers just through seeing sin and sinners with God's eyes, and feeling in reference to them with God's heart." †

If the sorrow in the heart of God over sin and sinners is mirrored in the wounded heart of Jesus in contact with sinful men and women, can it be said that there is no other way in which God can express His hostility to sin than by inflicting upon Jesus what sinners themselves

* p. 126. † p. 102.

must otherwise have suffered as the penal consequences of their sin ?

By Bushnell the hostility of God to sin is set forth along another but congruent line. Like McLeod Campbell he invites us to consider the experience of Jesus in the life He lived amongst sinful men and women. As the Lover of men Jesus could do no other than take upon His own heart the burden of the sin and misery of those with whom He came in contact. As He bore their sicknesses, so He bore their sins. " Christ, in what is called His vicarious sacrifice, simply engages, at the expense of great suffering and even of death itself, to bring us out of our sins themselves and so out of their penalties ; being Himself profoundly identified with our fallen state, and burdened in feeling with our evils." * " Every sort of love is found turning its feeling always into the feeling, and loss, and want, and woe, of whatever people, or person, or even enemy, it loves . . . There is a Gethsemane hid in all love, and when the fitting occasion comes, no matter how great and high the subject may be, its heavy groaning may be heard—as it was in Christ." †

In Christ's love-sufferings, in His vicarious sacrifice, Bushnell finds an unveiling of the suffering and self-sacrificing love of God. " God is love," and is so declared in every part of Scripture ; and what have we in this but the

* p. 7. † p. 12.

discovery that He is a being, in just such a relation of sympathy and burdened feeling for men as Christ was?" * "There is a Cross in God, before the wood is seen on Calvary; hid in God's own virtue itself, struggling on heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, and struggling as heavily now in the throne of the worlds." † "As certainly as God is love, the burdens of love must be upon Him. He must bear the lot of His enemies, even the wrongs of His enemies." ‡ "The Cross of Jesus represents and reveals the tremendous Cross that is hid in the bosom of God's love and life from eternity." §

If God's hostility to sin is revealed in His infliction of penalties as Judge, how much more impressively is His hostility to sin revealed in the suffering love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

McLeod Campbell and Horace Bushnell have had a profound influence upon subsequent thinking about the meaning of the Cross of Christ. There has, however, been some measure of reaction against their criticism of the forensic theory. Of this reaction Dr. Dale may be taken as a powerful and eloquent exponent.

In the preface to the seventh edition of *The Atonement*, first published in 1875, Dr.

* p. 31. † p. 35. ‡ p. 177. § p. 259.

Dale explains what he had in view in his Congregational Union Lecture: "In writing the Lectures, the men who were most distinctly and vividly present to my mind were those who have been trained under Evangelical influences, but whose faith in the Atonement has given way under the solvent of what is described as 'liberal thought'." *

In Dr. Dale's exposition of the doctrine of the Atonement the question of the remission of the penalties of sin is in the foreground. Till these penalties are dealt with in consistency with what is demanded by divine justice, it is God's wrath with which the sinner is confronted, not His love. "We were enemies—God was hostile to us, and He ceased to be hostile because Christ died as a propitiation for our sins." † Not only does the sinner need to be reconciled, but God needs to be reconciled. "'Propitiation' suggests the idea of an appeal to the mercy of God to lay aside His wrath." ‡ "Christ has allayed the divine anger, so that God for His sake is willing to forgive us." § Until the penalties due to his sin have been adequately dealt with, the sinner is excluded from the love and favour of God; God is standing aloof from him, is not approaching him and working upon him in fatherly love. "The guilt which hindered our access to God

* p. XV. † p. 242. ‡ p. 237. § p. 355.

(and, it is implied, God's access to us) has been atoned for, and we are no longer excluded from the honour and blessedness of approaching Him." *

So far Dr. Dale is reproducing the traditional exposition of the forensic theory. By toning it down in one and another direction he blunts the edge of various objections which have been brought against it. But the distinctive feature of his doctrine of the Atonement is the emphasis he puts upon the experience of Jesus which gave rise to the cry from the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is this experience, and apparently this experience alone, Dr. Dale has in view when he says: "If in any case the penalties of sin are remitted, some other divine act of at least equal intensity, and in which the ill-desert of sin is expressed with at least equal energy, must take its place." † Other sufferings of Christ are not taken into account in this connection. "He was forsaken of the Father and He died. His other sufferings were such as the innocent may endure in serving the sinful and the wretched. On the Cross He submitted to the actual penalty of sin." ‡ "He (Christ) never says that he was tempted 'for the remission of sins,' or that He endured hunger, thirst, weariness, and poverty 'for the remission of sins', or that it was for this

* p. 138. † p. 391. ‡ p. 424.

He endured the agony of Gethsemane."* (Where, one might ask, does Jesus say that His experience when He cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was "for the remission of sins?") Christ's endurance of the penalties of sin was "that exile from the joys of God's presence, which is the effect of the divine wrath in the case of the impenitent." †

Upholders of the forensic theory have almost invariably had in view the physical consequences of sin when they spoke of Christ enduring sin's penalties. The one kind of consequence of sin which Dr. Dale puts in the forefront is a "moral" consequence—separation from God. It is a daring suggestion, a staggering suggestion, that God could only receive sinners into His favour on the condition that He first inflicted upon Jesus separation from Himself. Jesus separated from God as a sinner is separated from God by His sin; God driving Jesus as an exile from His presence, Jesus who is drinking the cup put into His hands by God, Jesus who on the Cross is doing God's will—this seems to be the core of the Atonement as interpreted by Dr. Dale. Will a theory of the Atonement which has embodied in it a suggestion of this sort be helpful to "those whose faith in the Atonement has given way under the solvent of what is described as 'liberal thought'"?

* p. 69. † p. 61.

Dr. James Denney, great as a New Testament scholar, as a lucid and sinewy writer, as a Christian man and a Christian thinker, has been widely acclaimed as a defender of the forensic theory of the Atonement. If he was attached to this theory, it was by a slender thread, and, as we shall see, by a slender thread which proved to be exceptionally fragile. He himself protests against his being regarded as a defender of the forensic theory. "Few things have astonished me more than to be charged with teaching a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' doctrine of the Atonement, resting, as such a doctrine must do, on a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' conception of man's relation to God." "The relations of God with man are not those of a magistrate on the bench, pronouncing according to the act on the criminal at the bar." * Dr. Denney says little about eternal suffering as the penalty of sin. He rejects as emphatically as Dr. Gore the idea that God needs to be reconciled. "In the New Testament God is never spoken of as the object of reconciliation. Man is reconciled to God, but we never read that God is reconciled to man." † Once and again he quotes with warm approval Augustine's words: *Jam nos Deo diligenti reconciliati sumus*. There is indeed all through his writings much illuminating

* *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, pp. 46, 47
† *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 236.

criticism of the traditional forensic theory. His last book, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, is in this connection worthy of greater attention than it seems to have received. One notable thing in it is a singularly impressive study of the experience of Jesus in His life amongst sinful men and women, and another is the warmth of his commendation of McLeod Campbell and Horace Bushnell.

Nevertheless the influence of the forensic theory emerges in a curious form in one aspect of his interpretation of the death of Christ—an aspect of his interpretation of it which seems to many of his readers to be an intrusion of something alien to the main trend of his thinking, and to be as unconvincing as it is perplexing.

Dr. Denney, as he himself confesses, had been powerfully impressed by Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. One of Anselm's ideas had so gripped him that he could never withdraw himself from its lure; the idea, namely, that not Christ's life, but Christ's death, was what availed for the salvation of men.

It is the intrusion of this idea into his interpretation of the death of Christ which seems to be responsible for the perplexities to which his exposition of the doctrine of the Atonement has given rise. It was with this idea at any rate that he did work.

The one thing he concentrates attention

upon as Christ's endurance of the penalties of sin is His dying, dying "the death which all men die in this world, the death which Christ died on the Cross." * God has expressed his "judgment upon sin," His "condemnation of sin" by decreeing and inflicting death—physical death—as its penalty. "Death is the curse of the law. It is the experience in which the final repulsion of evil by God is decisively expressed." † Dr. Denney finds "intimations" of this in Scripture, especially in Paul's epistles. If, then, God is to be true to Himself, if justice is to be done "to the divine order in which sin has been committed, and in which sin and death are one," ‡ God must deal with the decreed penalty of death for sin. He deals with it by sending Christ to endure it; by sending Christ to die. "Jesus came into the world to die." § "If Christ had done less than die for us . . . if He had separated Himself from us, or declined to be one with us, in the solemn experience in which the darkness of sin is sounded and all its bitterness tasted—there would have been no Atonement." ‖ "The Cross inscribed, God is love, only because it is inscribed also, The wages of sin is death." ¶ By His death Christ has endured the divinely

* *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 229.
† *The Death of Christ*, p. 160.
‡ *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 161.
§ *The Death of Christ*, p. 12.
‖ *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, p. 107.
¶ *Studies in Theology*, p. 124.

decreed penalty of death, and so opened up the way for God to realize His loving purpose for the salvation of men. " His will to bless us is realized, as it was not before, on the basis of what Christ has done, and *of our appropriation of it.*" *

The outstanding feature of the interpretation of the death of Christ set forth in these quotations is the idea that physical death is to be regarded as the penal consequence of sin. That idea was widely prevalent in the Judaism of Paul's time. Like some other ideas it was taken over by Paul from his rabbinical teachers, but it did not enter into his essential Christian thought. What was essential in his Christian thought was what he had learned in the school of Christ. In the recorded sayings of Jesus there is no reference to the connection between sin and physical death, and there is nothing in the story of His life and passion to suggest that in dying He was conscious of paying the divinely decreed penalty of physical death for sin to make it possible for His Father in heaven to " realize His will to bless " sinful men.

In interpreting the death of Christ as the endurance of the physical death as the penalty which God had attached to sin, Dr. Denney was working with a conception borrowed from, or at least suggested by, the forensic theory.

* *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 238.

But this "forensic" conception cannot be carried through. If the endurance of physical death by Christ was the endurance of death as the penal consequence of sin, the natural inference, according to the forensic theory, would be that those who put their trust in what Christ has done for them are to be exempted from physical death.

Faced with that difficulty, Dr. Denney finds a way of escape which involves a complete abandonment of the theory that before the love of God for sinners can come into effective operation the penalty of sin must be paid by Christ, and its payment by Christ acknowledged and accepted by the sinner. "If the question is put, what, then, is it which we are spared or saved from by the death of Jesus—what is it that we do not experience because He died? the answer is that He saves us from dying in our sins . . . It is because He died for us. . . . that the darkness has died away, and a light shines in which we have peace with God and rejoice in hope of His glory."* That answer appeals to the Christian heart. But in that answer Dr. Denney has lost what slender attachment to the forensic theory he ever had, and is moving on the lines of his own deepest and most fruitful thinking on the significance of the Cross of Christ. The words just quoted were amongst the last he wrote before his

* *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 283.

untimely death. For those who had come under the spell of his richly endowed personality they stir the reflection that, if a few more years had been granted him, he had it in him to have given us a nobler book on the Atonement than any he had published.

Our brief and necessarily fragmentary survey of the history of Christian thought has indicated (1) that the forensic theory of the Atonement was not current, quite certainly not authoritative, in the early Christian centuries; (2) that it was first given a prominent place in theological discussion by Anselm; (3) that it was formulated by Protestant theologians under the influence of categories inherited from the Church of the Middle Ages; (4) that it has undergone various modifications, and one and another of its features been toned down; (5) that, examined in the light of the life and teaching of Jesus, it has not kept its former commanding place; (6) that some recent attempts to rehabilitate it in a modified form have not been conspicuously successful.

The theory, therefore, cannot be said to have behind it the authority of the Christian Church of all the centuries.

IV

THE APPEAL OF CHRIST

CHAPTER XIII

THE APPEAL OF CHRIST AND HIS CROSS

IT has seemed strange to some readers of Paul's epistles that he should seldom refer to incidents in the life of Jesus and seldom quote sayings of Jesus in support of his appeals and arguments. As we have already noted, Paul cannot have been ignorant of the life of Jesus, of the kind of things He did and of the kind of things He said. Without knowledge of the life of Jesus, a man of his exceptional intellectual gifts could never have become one of the leading persecutors of His followers. As a persecutor he must have learned a good deal more about Jesus from the men and women he was harrying, and as a Christian in touch with fellow-Christians who lived in the atmosphere of reminiscences of their Master, he could not have failed to become fully acquainted with the Jesus of history. Of the fulness of his knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus there is one sure proof. There is general agreement that his religious and ethical ideals are in profound harmony with the ideals of Jesus. Those ideals could not

have come to him through the Judaism in which he had been reared, nor through any knowledge he had gained of religious and ethical movements in the Gentile world. They could only have come to him, as he himself was convinced, through Jesus in whose life and teaching they found expression. It is therefore to go wide of the mark to suggest that the paucity of his references to incidents in the life of Jesus and of his quotations of sayings of Jesus, is an indication of his lack of knowledge of, or of interest in, the life and teaching of the Jesus of history.

For an explanation of the fact that in Paul's epistles there are fewer explicit references to incidents in the life of Jesus and to His sayings than we might have expected, we are reminded, and with justice, that these epistles were written to deal with specific situations in the Christian communities to which they were addressed, and that they were to be read by Christians to whom he had had many opportunities, by talks and addresses, of telling what Jesus did and said. But there is something further to be taken into account. What specially fascinated Paul in the story of the life of Jesus was the unique personality behind all that He did and all that He said. It was for its disclosure of what Jesus *was* that he valued the story of what He *did* and what He *said*. For Paul the centre of Christianity was not the

ethical and religious teaching of Jesus or His example, but His unique personality, of which His teaching and His life were the expression. The personality of Jesus was at the heart of all his Christian experience and all his Christian thinking. "In Christ" was the phrase he used to describe his relation to Christ. Christ was more than his teacher and example. He was his ever present Friend with whose personality he never ceased to be in touch. "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (*Gal.* 2.20). And when he looks out upon the history of humanity he finds that the personality of Jesus is what all the past of humanity has been leading up to, and that the personality of Jesus is a new starting-point for the future of humanity. "All things have been created unto him" (*Col.* 1.16). Jesus is the second Adam, the inaugurator of a new race. In Jesus, "the firstborn among many brethren," there emerges a fresh development not only in the history of humanity but in the history of the created universe.

In his thinking about Christ, Paul concentrated upon His wonderful personality. The hint given us by this fact we keep in view in what we have to say about the appeal of Christ and His Cross.

It is Jesus the Lover of men who makes the appeal. Behind His appeal there is His love for

His fellows, a love unique in its greatness and in its strength. As we have seen in our second chapter, they were great things Jesus aimed at securing for His fellows. The strength of His love was disclosed in the resoluteness with which He faced the hostility of Pharisees and Scribes who were convinced that what He was aiming at involved a fatal injury to the Jewish religion and to the Jewish nation. Jesus, rooting Himself in His own unique spiritual experience, was sure that what He was aiming at was the true good for His fellows. Nothing therefore could deflect Him from the settled purpose by which His ministry was shaped, not even the prospect of a violent death. Love for His fellows steeled Him to confront and endure the worst sufferings His enemies could inflict upon Him. His Cross was a revelation of the wealth and strength of the love which was at work in the depths of His personality.

The unique love of Jesus for His fellows had its counterpart, one might even say its explanation, in His unique experience of filial fellowship with His Father in heaven. In this region we get pregnant suggestions about "the infinite nature," of Jesus, and about the possibilities of the personalities of His brother men. Jesus was dominated by the conviction that He was one with His Father in heaven in heart and will, and that it belonged to Him to reveal the Father to His fellows.

"No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (*Matt.* 11.27). So He believed that in His love for His fellows He was revealing the love of God.

In His parable of the Prodigal Son, He took for granted that His attitude towards publicans and sinners was the expression of the heart and will of God. Further, His Cross was the crowning manifestion of the strength of His love for His fellows, and here too He believed that His love was the manifestation of the love of God for His estranged children. At Cæsarea Philippi, after He had spoken to the Twelve of the sufferings that would be inflicted upon Him in Jerusalem, "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter . . . thou art a stumblingblock unto me . . . for thou mindest not *the things of God*, but the things of men" (*Matt.* 16.21-23). The way of suffering was God's will for Jesus. Behind the love of Jesus on the way of suffering was the love of God. In the Garden of Gethsemane we have a similar expression of the conviction of Jesus that on the way of suffering His love was one with the love of God. "And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away

from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt" (*Mark* 14.35-36). In the Cross then we have the supreme expression of the love of Jesus for His fellows, and at the same time the supreme expression of the love of God for His children.

If Jesus is so one with God that He can claim to be the revealer of God, there is something out of keeping with His mind in any line of thought which suggests that God is less attractive in His attitude to sinful men and women than Jesus. It is Jesus Himself who has taught us to believe in God as God in Christ, to believe that God in His heart and will towards His sinful children is Jesus-like. This is the meaning of the great saying in the Fourth Gospel: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

For what is it that Jesus the Lover of men and the Revealer of the love of God makes His appeal to men? For an answer to this question it is helpful to have regard to the story of the life He lived amongst His fellows. As we have seen, what He was ever aiming at was to bring them to be sharers of His own life of fellowship with His Father in heaven and of loving service to His fellows. This is how Paul interprets the aim of Jesus. "When the

fulness of the time came, God sent forth his son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. . . . God sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bondservant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God" (*Gal.* 4.4-7). "Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained (did predestinate, A.V.) to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (*Rom.* 8.29).

In this appeal of Christ to men that they live a life of filial fellowship with their Father in heaven and of loving service to others His own personality is not pushed into the background. In the days of His earthly ministry it was through the power of His personality at work upon their hearts men were drawn to be sharers in His life. So He could not but lay stress upon personal devotion to Himself as the means by which they were to be renewed in mind and heart and will. He identified His person with His message. That explains the insistence upon personal loyalty which we find in sayings such as these, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven" (*Matt.* 10.32). "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth

his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (*Matt.* 10.37-39). On the other hand, He disowns any profession of loyalty to His person which is divorced from loyalty to His message. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (*Matt.* 7.21).

At the heart of the appeal of Christ is an appeal for loyalty to Himself in whose personality and life His spiritual ideals are realized. It is in fellowship with Christ as our unseen Friend we gain a growing insight into what His love purposes to transform us, and a growing power to rise to the heights whither His love is drawing us. Loyalty to Christ as our unseen Friend is the meaning of Christian discipleship. Where that is present, nothing else is of paramount importance. Where that is absent, nothing else counts.

Because the Jesus of history puts in the forefront loyalty to Himself in whose personality His ideals were realized, the appeal of Christ can be made to the universal heart of man. He found what was essential for man's true life in fellowship with the God of love and in love for others. These things transcended the distinctions between Jew and Gentile. Here was something on which all the children of the One God and Father of all could meet as on

common ground, something which could bind the children of God into one brotherhood of humanity. Jesus, with His penetrative insight into what was involved in His own spiritual experience, was aware that His life-work was for man as man. Paul was no innovator, he was but the faithful interpreter of the mind of his Master when he said: In Christ "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all and in all" (*Col.* 3.11).

The appeal of Christ involves great demands upon those to whom it is addressed. "'Tis very hard to be a Christian." There can be no worthy response to His appeal without sympathy with His ideals, and without a decisive resolution to be loyal to His ideals whatever may be the cost. It might be comparatively easy to give assent to doctrines about Christ, or to be scrupulous in our observance of religious rites. But to reckon as what is supremely worth striving for in our daily life the things for which Jesus lived and suffered and died, to identify ourselves whole-heartedly with the ideals for our life set forth in the life and Cross of Jesus, that is no light task. It demands the exercise of the highest powers of our whole self, of mind and heart and will.

Jesus knew how many and how strong were

the forces that had to be fought down, if there was to be a loyal response to His appeal. He knew that "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" might "choke the word." He knew the man "that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth." He knew that "narrow is the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it." He warned those to whom he appealed of the hardships, the renunciations, and the self-sacrifices in which a response to His appeal might involve them. "Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he hath wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold him begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." This warning He puts more tersely in a saying attributed to Jesus by Origen, but not preserved in our Gospels: "He that is near me is near the fire." He intimated plainly that His disciples might be called upon to make renunciations. "If thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna."

In appealing for a loyalty to Himself and to His ideals which He knew would put an extraordinary strain upon what will-force was at the command of His fellows, Jesus revealed the greatness of His faith in what it was in them to do and dare and endure. He was not only a Lover of men, He was a Believer in men. His exceptional love for them gave Him an exceptional insight into their intrinsic worth as children of His Father in heaven, into the spiritual heights to which it was possible for them to rise. And it was with a keen sense of their latent possibilities He made such imperious demands upon them. He knew that it was only in response to His demands that they could become what they might be and what they ought to be. As He said to His disciples, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever lose his life for my sake shall find it" (*Matt.* 16.25).

What Jesus aims at in making His appeal to men is that by their response they may find their life, their true life, that they may become what it is possible for them to be. Let us take note of some of the ways in which man's truest, highest life is to be found through a response to the appeal of Christ.

1. A response to the appeal of Christ opens up a wide field for the heroic instincts of human nature.

Heroism has a large place in our ideal of what constitutes a noble life. The stories of heroic deeds stir our hearts: they enlarge our conception of what is possible to human nature; they fire us with the ambition to become in our own way, when the fitting opportunity comes, heroes or heroines.

Jesus is the hero of heroes. What a unique conception He had of the service He might render to His fellows! With what tenacity He clung to His purpose to spend His life in the service of His fellows! In carrying out His purpose, how He dared to be true to His vocation, no matter how few might sympathise with His ideals, no matter though He might have to stand alone, with no one to understand Him but His Father in heaven! What burdens He had to carry, what heartaches to endure, in loyalty to His vocation! And at last the Suffering Servant of humanity was rewarded for His service with the Cross of Calvary. There is no story of heroism that can stir the heart of man as does the story of the crucified Jesus.

The appeal of Christ is an appeal to all that is heroic in man. Loyalty to His ideals in our personal spiritual life and in our life as citizens of the Kingdom of God brings us into situations in which we are confronted with malign forces, with risks to be run, with seeming impossibilities to be overcome, with sacrifices

to be made, with sufferings to be endured. That is, we are continually presented with opportunities of playing the hero. Under the leadership of the Prince of heroes who died on the Cross in loyalty to the service of His fellows there can never be lacking the stimulus to raise our life, however humble its setting may be, to heroic heights of service and self-sacrifice.

2. A response to the appeal of Christ makes wide room for originality in Christian life and Christian service. With love like that of Jesus as our ethical ideal we cannot be content with mere conformity to currently accepted standards of goodness. Love is ever compelling us to transcend conventionalism. On this Jesus is insistent, "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matt.* 5.46-48). "More than others"—that phrase of Jesus reminds us to what great heights love is summoning us, and that other phrase, "perfect as your heavenly Father," reminds us that there are ever heights beyond what we have yet reached, that love like that of Jesus is an infinite ideal. Love is the secret of originality in the moral sphere. Love urges us to break with accepted ways of thinking and acting which are out of harmony

with the ideals of Jesus. Love urges us to be pioneers, to be loyal followers of the Master whose love, expressing itself in ways original as His own personality and obnoxious to the leaders of the conventional Judaism of His day, brought Him at last to the Cross.

From this point of view we can appreciate the emphasis which writers on ethics put upon "moral autonomy." They are impatient with conceptions of goodness which do not rise above the level of mere observance of moral rules imposed upon us by an external authority, whether the authority of public opinion or any similar authority. They insist that true goodness must be the outcome of what we are in our inner self. Now, that is what is driven home upon us by Jesus. That is the meaning of His demand for goodness which is the inevitable fruit of a good heart. Such moral autonomy is not an assertion of man's self-will in contrast with the will of God. It points to an identification of man's will with God's. True goodness is not reached by mere obedience to the will of God imposed upon us from without as something alien to our own best self; it is only reached when God's will is one with our will. The moral law is "an expression of a divine will which is at once one with and other than ours." * When the ethical ideal is

* Professor C. C. J. Webb, *Christianity and the Present Moral Unrest*, p. 230.

conceived as love, there is no room for contrariety between moral autonomy and loyalty to the will of God. God is the ideal and inspirer of love. "Where love is, there God is." When love lays its creative power upon us, it is the God of love who is at work in our hearts. God is the ally of our better self. So, out of such a conviction, Augustine, greatly daring, can say, "Love and do what thou wilt."

Similarly, from the point of view just spoken of we can appreciate the emphasis which writers on ethics put upon self-realization. What is mean by self-realization is indicated by the saying of William James that "man wants to be stretched to the utmost" and by the words which G. F. Watts chose for his motto: "The utmost for the highest." A response to the appeal of Christ does indeed involve *repression* of all that interferes with the attainment of "the highest," but, on the other hand, it involves new power for the *expression* of all that is best in man. Love keeps down the impulses of the lower self which war against the realization of the better self, and by opening new fields for Christian life and service affords widening opportunities for the realization of the better self. As Jesus said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." And of Jesus Himself it is true that on the way of love, which was the way of the Cross, He found Himself; that, in the phraseology of the

epistle to the Hebrews, He "was made perfect through sufferings."

Paul's life, as we have already indicated, is an illustration of self-realization through a response to the appeal of Christ. In his earlier years he must have been conscious of the "urge" of his own powers of mind and heart, and conscious of his responsibility for making the most of them. He started with a strongly marked individuality. Then there came to him his experience of the love of God shed abroad in his heart and of the incoming of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Henceforth His life was merged, "lost" in the greater life of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself up for him. His narrow individuality was lost, but a richer individuality was found. His sense of this is indicated in his own striking phrase "I, yet not I." "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." He could with equal truth have given this other turn to the phrase "Not I, yet I." Through Christ and what Christ meant for him there came to him a self-realization, a drawing out of all that was best in him, to which he could never otherwise have attained. He was sure that in Christ he was on the way to become his true self.

3. A response to the appeal of Christ involves a new outlook upon the ills of life.

Why there should be so much suffering in a

world created and governed by an all-powerful and all-loving God is a problem whose full solution may be quite beyond our reach. One thing, however, is plain, that the difficulty of its solution is only increased, if we assume that the chief end of our existence in this world is the enjoyment of happiness. On the other hand, the problem is immensely eased if the chief end of our existence in this world is to be found in the things which Jesus reckoned of supreme worth, in the things for which Jesus lived and suffered and died. For the attainment of these things we may have to tread the way of suffering. It is through suffering love is made perfect. For love's sake, therefore, suffering may be welcomed. As it was by Paul: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ (which is the love of Christ) may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: For when I am weak, then I am strong" (1 *Cor.* 12.9-10). To Paul suffering presented itself "less as a problem to solve than as an opportunity to seize." * Suffering brought him the chance of sharing in the love which was at the heart of the sufferings and death of Jesus. So he could face the worst that might befall him not only with resignation, but with the stern joy of a man who was sure that he would be

* *The Spiritual Genius of St. Paul*, ch. 23.

" more than a conqueror," that through whatever he might have to suffer there would come to him a spiritual gain which he would otherwise miss. So he could say to the Colossians, " I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake " (*Col.* 1.24), and to the Philippians, " If I am poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all " (*Phil.* 1.17). His response to the appeal of Christ gave him " the faith and courage to grasp life's nettle."

The way of suffering is the way to the furtherance not only of the highest interests of the individual, but also of the well-being of the Kingdom of God. Love expressing itself in service and sacrifice for others has an exceptional part to play as a bond of brotherhood. Suffering love is therefore a prime factor in social reform. Where it is weak, changes in the social framework may have few fruitful results. Where it is strong, it cannot but show its power to lift the social framework nearer to its ideal. Sacrificial love is the creative power in the life of the family. To such love we have to look as the creative power in the wider social spheres.

Further, it is no paradox to say that the way of suffering is the way to the blessed life. Suffering love has its own joy, a joy for ever withheld from those to whom the chief end of life is the enjoyment of pleasure. In the

story, as told in the Fourth Gospel, of the last hours of His passion we find this saying of Jesus: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled" (*John* 15.11). In keeping with this disclosure by Jesus of the joy that was at the heart of His last sufferings, it is the testimony of the best of our race, mothers, saints and heroes, that suffering, love and joy go hand in hand, that they are, indeed, one indissoluble experience." *

4. A response to the appeal of Christ involves a new understanding of the "worth whileness" of our daily work and struggle.

We are told that "the whole process of evolution is a coherent thought leading on to man." †

Something not unlike this idea was suggested by Paul.‡ He found the origin of the universe in the creative love of God in Christ: "in

* One or two relevant sentences may here be quoted from the close of George Eliot's *Romola*. "It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world, as well as for ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good."

† Professor J. Arthur Thomson, *The System of Animate Nature*, II. p. 402.

‡ In this connection what Paul says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians is worth noting: "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural (merely psychical); then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven" (1 *Cor.* 15.45-47).

Christ were all things created." The goal of the history of the universe and of humanity was the Man Christ Jesus. With the advent of Jesus a new stage in the history of humanity was reached. Jesus was the second Adam, the inaugurator of a new humanity. The creative love of God in Christ had been at work in the age-long processes of the past. The creative love of God in Christ is at work in the fashioning of the new humanity.

Paul's vision of the new humanity is Christ's vision of the Kingdom of God, expressed in language suitable for the Gentile world. It has an extraordinary heartening message. There is heartening in the conception of the great mysterious world as a "vale of soul-making," or "a school of manhood." But Paul's conception of the meaning of the world and our share in its life is still more heartening. God's creative love, at work in the whole created universe, is at work with the new humanity of which Christ is the Head. But God cannot achieve His purpose of love with the children of men without the help of fellow-workers. For fellow-workers He looks to those who have responded to the appeal of Christ. This then is the meaning of our life in this great mysterious world. We are here to be fellow-workers with God in the great enterprise He has on hand for the re-fashioning of humanity according to the ideals of the Man Christ Jesus,

and through the power of the life-giving spirit of the Man Christ Jesus.

For fellow-workers with God the world is a sacred place. It is the world of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has been called into being and is upheld by His fatherly love; it is moving on to a consummation worthy of His fatherly love. There is a divine enterprise afoot in the world, a divine enterprise whose goal is the Kingdom of God, the new humanity. In the carrying out of the divine enterprise we have our individual part assigned to us as fellow-workers with God. Our daily work, if it is done "in the name of Christ," if it is inspired by loyalty to the interests of the new humanity of which Christ is the Head, is a contribution to the success of the divine enterprise. Here "all service ranks the same with God"; there is no "secular" work which may not be transformed into sacred service. It belongs to us so to put our heart into our work, so to let our work be inspired with the spirit of Christ, that the interests of the divine enterprise will be furthered. As far as we fail here, so far does God fail in His purpose. As far as we play our part worthily at the post assigned to us, so far does God succeed in His purpose. We may be baulked in our efforts to achieve the particular things upon which we have set our hearts. We may have to suffer disappointments and reverses and heartaches, but nothing

can prevent us from being "faithful failures." Nothing can prevent us from so handling the mishaps of life as to succeed in furthering the interest of the divine enterprise itself, "To fail in good spirits" *is* success.

It may not be inappropriate, in conclusion, to refer to the relation of the Christian Society to the appeal of Christ to the heart and conscience of men.

In the days of His flesh the appeal of Christ won a response through the power of His personality behind it. It was to the transformed personality of His disciples He looked for the furtherance of the interests of the Kingdom of God when He should be no longer with them in bodily presence as of old. "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand. Even so let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (*Matt.* 5.13-16).

Here we have the Christian Society in germ. It is true that we find almost nothing in the recorded words of Jesus about ecclesiastical organization. That Jesus, however, meant to found the Christian Society and did actually found it, seems to be beyond doubt. When "he appointed twelve, that they might be

with him," He was forming the nucleus of a Society of His disciples to carry on His work "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them." Had He been no more than a Teacher, such a Society might not have been indispensable, but for carrying on His work as Leader in the Kingdom of God such a Society *was* indispensable. It was through His personality His work had been inaugurated, and only through personalities transformed, or at least on the way to being transformed, by the personality of their Master could His work be continued.

In its ideal, the Christian Society is a fellowship of men and women who are bound together by loyalty to Jesus as Lord of their life and Leader in the Kingdom of God, who hearten each other through worship and service in their quest of the things for which Jesus lived and suffered and died; who accept individual responsibility for the common task of bringing their fellows to be sharers of the new life that has come to them through Christ; who realize that their appeal to others on behalf of Christ depends for its success on the measure in which the personality of Christ is reflected from what they themselves are. Nor has the Christian Society altogether failed to live up to this ideal. All through the centuries and in all branches of the Christian Society there have been men and women, whose personalities

have been a disclosure of what Christ in His life and teaching and Cross stands for, who have so worked on the heart and conscience of their fellows as to draw forth a response to Christ's appeal.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the appeal of Christ in His Cross has been too often somewhat obscured. The things which Jesus regarded as of supreme worth, the things for which He was nailed to the Cross of Calvary, have been too often thrown into the shade when undue importance has been attached to things which, however important they may be in their own place, are not the things for which Jesus lived and died. So we find to-day that many persons who are leal-hearted in their reverence for Jesus are disposed to pass severe judgments upon the Christian Church, the reason of whose existence is to appeal to men on behalf of Christ and Christ's ideals.

Such an attitude to the Church raises the question how it comes about that there is any ground for the uneasy feeling that the Church has somehow, in one direction and another, got out of touch with the ideals of its Founder. That is a question which deserves serious consideration. For an answer we go back to the life Jesus lived amongst His fellows.

The ideals of Jesus were the fulfilment of what was best in the Jewish faith, but they were startlingly novel for the Jews of His day;

they clashed with many of the currently accepted religious and ethical ideals. The "treasures of morality and religion" in the Jewish faith were interwined with the multitudinous precepts of the Jewish law, oral as well as written. Many of these precepts, bearing upon the national customs and religious ritual, may have been more or less useful expedients for preserving "the treasures of morality and religion." They did not in themselves form part of what was best in the Jewish faith; they were accompaniments of the Jewish faith. But whether they belonged to the written law or to the oral law ("the traditions of the elders") they were regarded as having behind them the same divine authority as "the treasures of morality and religion." Some of the Jews might treat these accompaniments of their Jewish faith as of secondary importance in comparison with the more essential things, but others, less spiritually minded, were disposed to be content with a due attention to the accompaniments of the essential things.

Jesus in His life and teaching laid the whole stress upon what "the treasures of morality and religion" in the Jewish faith were leading up to, upon goodness springing from a good heart, from a heart inspired by love, and upon filial fellowship with God as a loving Father. This brought Him into conflict with the Pharisees and the Scribes. They could have

found a place for what Jesus put in the forefront; but Jesus gave such a supreme place to a good heart and to the fatherly love of God as to throw one and another precept of the law, written as well as oral, into the background. So they became resolute in their hostility to Jesus.

Jesus, on His part, could do no other than face the storm of hostility which His ministry had roused. His love for His fellows was too strong for aught else to be possible. He was sure that their true good was to be found, not in adherence to the Jewish faith as formulated by the Pharisees and the Scribes, but where He Himself found it, in fellowship with a God of fatherly love, in love-inspired service to the Heavenly Father's children, in citizenship in a Kingdom of God wide as the love of the one Father of all, wide as the great family of the one Father. Love for His fellows steeled Him to confront the worst His enemies could do to Him, to confront death upon the Cross. He was crucified because He was loyal to His insistence upon "the weightier matters of the law" as against the observance of its accompaniments.

Consideration of what it was that brought Jesus to the Cross may help us to an understanding of the contrast which is drawn to-day, and not always unjustly, between Christ with His ideals and the weaknesses of the Church of Christ.

As the Christian Society, with its first headquarters in Jerusalem, grew in numbers, spread into new countries and found itself in new environments, it was inevitable that there should be development in its accompaniments. So there came about changes in the organization of its government and ministry, and changes in the way in which the Christian faith was intellectually interpreted in face of new intellectual environments.

Such developments may have been legitimate enough; they may have been more or less necessary accompaniments of the Christian faith. But then there came a tendency to regard these accompaniments as having behind them the same divine authority as the things for which Jesus had lived and died. They were treated as more or less essential factors of the Christian faith. So it came to be assumed that the grace of God could only be conveyed to men through a Christian Society which had a particular form of Church government and ministry, and that no one was qualified to be a member of the Society of Christ's disciples who did not accept the intellectual formulation of the Christian faith arrived at by Christian theologians working in the atmosphere of the religious philosophy of the Greeks.

Undue emphasis on these and similar accompaniments of the Christian faith has had unhappy results for the Christian Church. It

is largely responsible for the present divided state of Christendom. The different branches of the Church are at one in their acknowledgment of the things in the Christian faith, for which Jesus lived and died. What separates them and leads them into unseemly alienation and strife arises from different estimates of the accompaniments of the Christian faith—forms of Church government and ministry, theological creeds and similar things.

Further, preoccupation with these accompaniments of the Christian faith tends to distract attention from the great things, for whose furtherance the Christian Society has been called into existence, the things which Jesus regarded as alone of supreme worth. So it has come to pass that in many cases enthusiasm for the worship and work and ministry of the Church has been waning, not so much from lack of loyalty to Jesus as the Lord of life, as from distrust of the Church's loyalty to Jesus.

The weaknesses of the Church are not only confessed by those who keep aloof from its corporate life, but confessed frankly and sorrowfully by many of its most devoted members and workers. May not one cure for these weaknesses be found in increased resoluteness on the part of the Church to share in Christ's estimate of the supreme worth of the things for which He suffered on the Cross?

If these things, and not the secondary things which are merely their accompaniments, were more steadily kept in the foreground, might there not be less unseemly misunderstanding, suspicion, and strife, in the relations of the different branches of the one Church of Christ to one another, and might not a hopeful way be opened up for greater co-operation and greater corporate unity? Might there not ensue a revival of enthusiasm for the work of the Church in lifting social, national and international life nearer to the ideals of Jesus the Lover of men? Might not a few earnest-minded men and women who are somewhat alienated from organized Christianity be drawn to take their share into the fellowship and service of the Society of the disciples of Jesus?

Paul, in his strenuous opposition to the demand of Judaizing Christians that the observance of the Jewish law should be imposed upon the Gentile converts in Galatia, fell back upon the Cross of Christ and what it meant in relation to the Jewish law. He knew that Jesus was brought to the Cross because He drew a sharp distinction between "the weightier matters of the law" and its merely temporary accompaniments, and that He magnified the former at the expense of the latter. So, in the interests of what the crucified Jesus died for, he resisted the demand of the Judaizing Christians; he would glory in nothing but the Cross. Might

not the Church, when the claims of the Christian faith, as interpreted by the life and teaching and Cross of Jesus, are balanced against the claims of the accompaniments of the Christian faith, take as its own guiding light these great words of Paul: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"?

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